

The Libyan Rebellion: With Media as a Weapon

*A study of a modern insurgency's effort to
influence international media*

By Amund Bakke Foss



Master's thesis – Peace and Conflict Studies,
Department of Political Science

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Abstract

“The success of this revolution I owe to two: First is God. Second is the journalist.”
(Mohammed Elkish, head of the international media unit, NTC)

During the spring of 2011 thousands of international journalists entered rebel-held eastern Libya to report on the popular uprising that rapidly developed into a full-blown civil war. The revolutionary insurgency was in need of both international legitimacy and support for their struggle, and they got what they wanted: Support from the western public, and military support in form of a UN certified air based bombing campaign against their adversary, Muammar Gaddafi. This qualitative study examines how the Libyan rebel movement organized, strategized and worked to facilitate for, and influence, international journalists during the conflict. The research is based on interviews with international journalists, Libyan rebel activists, and people in leading positions in the Libyan rebel movement, the National Transitional Council. I will show how the rebels saw international journalist and massive media attention as a vital weapon in their struggle. Without this kind of attention the rebels hardly believe they would have succeeded, and they assume that their uprising could have been stifled. The rebels also believe their intense media efforts helped drum up the support for the UN Security Council’s decision to intervene in the conflict through a military campaign. I will show how the rebel movement’s media organization was relatively large, was structured, and emerged from below. There was no clear plan from the beginning, but as events intensified both strategy and organizing evolved rapidly. Their own ‘Rebel Media Center’ was central in this work. The rebels used propaganda as a part of their strategy, at times they mislead and produced false information, and many journalists used this information uncritically. I will argue that during the war in Libya there was a mutual dependence between the journalists and the rebels. Both groups needed each other to achieve what they wanted. This win-win situation helped the rebels’ cause, and by savvy and intense efforts they managed to take advantage of the situation and benefit from it.

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Amund Bakke Foss, Oslo, May 2012

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1 Introduction

It was an overwhelming welcome. On February 23, 2011, three days after Muammar Gaddafi's men fled Benghazi, CNN's Ben Wedeman was the first international journalist to enter the rebel-held eastern Libya. Tens of thousands of rallying citizens met him, praising his presence and thanking him for being there. His live report was the first TV-pictures the world could see from the popular uprising. "I almost feel that I am not up to the task of conveying the significance of what we are seeing here", Wedeman said. Behind him, thousands of Libyans shouted together: "CNN! CNN!"

This thesis is about the Libyan rebels. The nonviolent popular uprising that started in February 2011, turned into a full-blown rebellion when anti-government protests were met with violence from the regime, and the opposition chose to take up arms. Dentists, teachers, mechanics, barbers and students got together. Even Libyans living abroad came home to participate. Together they had one main goal: To force the government army to give up, and for their dictator through 42 years, Muammar Gaddafi, to step down. Because their opponent was militarily superior, the rebel movement would not succeed on their own. The international community chose to intervene with an UN-certified air based bombing campaign. Eight months later, Gaddafi was shot dead.

The Libyan rebels, and the spectacle they made, managed to grab the world's attention. International media flocked in thousands to Benghazi, the eastern city that became the center of the rebellion. The rebels' opinions and their struggle were heavily publicized, daily, throughout the world. People worldwide could closely follow the development of the war on Libyan soil. This thesis examines how the rebels managed to gain, and keep, this attention. It examines the rebels' media strategies and to what extent they used international media as a tool in their insurgency.

Those undertaking an insurgency are trying to find a way to use their strengths against the weakness of their more powerful adversary. The capability to gain legitimacy and external support can be two such strengths. Insurgents often seek to legitimize their use of violence, and translate this into meaningful support for their cause. Using international media to spread the word can be an important and helpful strategy. My research question reflects this logic:

In what way did the Libyan rebel movement organize and facilitate for international journalists during their rebellion, what factors motivated their effort, and to what extent did they see media as a useful tool in this struggle?

Sub-questions:

- **How did the rebels' media organization emerge, who took the initiatives and how did it develop?**
- **In what way did the rebels believe an emphasis on media could help their cause directly?**
- **The journalists and the rebels worked closely in the same environment over months: In what way were the journalists and the rebels in need of each other?**

When this is written, in the spring of 2012, just one year have passed since the so-called Arab Spring started to unfold. The amount of academic work on the issue is now growing. Still, until now, little has been written academically about the Libyan rebel movement's media effort. This is clearly a knowledge gap. I believe it is important that someone investigate this issue. Here are my reasons:

- When the Arab Spring unfolded we saw a new wave of popular uprisings in the Middle East, and this phenomenon should be investigated thoroughly. To an unknown degree, media have played a part in these uprisings. To examine one case—like the Libyan rebellion—can help illuminate and exemplify media's role in such uprisings.
- To examine how a modern insurgency emphasize international media in their strategy is important, in order to understand one aspect of the complicated dynamics of a 21st century revolution. The issue of an insurgency's ability to influence media is important to investigate and discuss in today's world, because media have the ability to be an agenda-setter, and can affect both public opinion and states' foreign policy.
- The Libyan rebel movement managed to do something many insurgencies have not managed before them: To grab the world's attention and get international support in form of a UN Security Council resolution. The international community intervened in the rebels' struggle and bombed their adversary to retreat. Thus, it is crucial to

investigate what this group did to obtain such attention and support. If an emphasis on media actually can help getting international support for an insurgency's cause, such efforts are something that must be examined comprehensively.

- To describe and analyze the Libyan rebels organization, motivation and effort is needed to lay an academic groundwork, which later can be used as a necessary platform for further research on similar issues.

I assume that the reader to some extent is informed about the scope of the recent revolutionary wave in the Arab world, about its relative successes and about its bloody tragedies. I also expect the reader to have some knowledge about the main aspects of the international intervention in the Libyan conflict. In addition I assume that the reader takes into account the scope of international media's comprehensive coverage of international events in today's globalized world, and thus its possibility to influence opinions.

My personal motivation for writing a thesis about the Libyan rebellion is two-sided. Firstly, my classes at the University of Oslo in the beginning of 2011 allowed me to dig deeper into the new uprisings taking place in the Arab world at the time. I took courses in both international security strategy and conflict related journalism, and the topics we discussed allowed me to see the unfolding events from various perspectives. I wrote papers on the Libyan revolution, insurgency, and journalism's impact on conflicts. Secondly, I hold a bachelors degree in journalism from the University College in Oslo, and have been working part time in the national press alongside my studies. I am a big consumer of international news, and the Libyan rebellion early caught my attention. I read all I could find about the conflict, watched documentaries and followed the work of several journalists and photographers. I early noticed something interesting: An organized "Rebel Media Center" met the journalists that entered Libya from the east, during the spring. I wanted to find out more about the effort behind such a center: Who had set it up? And why? A combination of my interest in insurgencies, the new Arabic uprisings, and a profound interest in journalism, lead me to write this master's thesis.

To answer my research question I had to travel to Libya. I did so in a highly unstable post-conflict period, five months after Gaddafi was killed, and the war had ended. It was vital for the project to interview first-hand sources. I found qualitative research interviewing as the considerably most efficient method to obtain the information I needed. Before the trip I

interviewed journalists from around the world, who covered the Libyan conflict. In Benghazi and Tripoli I interviewed people that were central in the rebel movement, from activists in the front line, to people in leading positions. This thesis is based on these interviews. In all 14 key informants have contributed in the research.

I will start off with a chapter that reviews existing literature on this academic field. This part is important because it provides theoretical background, support and context to the new information that will be displayed. Next comes a chapter that looks briefly into the most significant history of Libya, and more comprehensively into the Libyan revolution. A proper presentation of the eight-month long war, and its international implications, is needed to understand and contextualize the Libyan rebels' actions. Many of the interviews conducted are closely connected to the timeline of war, and this timeline is thus important for the reader to have in mind. The third chapter is a presentation of my methodology, how I carried out my research, how I worked in Libya, how I chose my research design and what considerations I did during the research period. This chapter also presents all my informants, in order to explain why each of them is relevant for this thesis. These first three chapters build up to the most extensive chapter, "Results and analysis", where I present my findings in three subchapters: The journalists, the young activists, and the leadership. The information I have obtained is categorized further into sections relevant for each subchapter, and is related with existing literature and theories on the subject. Such organization of the chapter will help create a comprehensive picture on the Libyan rebel movement's actions and efforts towards the international media during the conflict. In the end I will conclude and draw a line between the different chapters, which hopefully will enable a deeper understanding of the implications of this group's actions.

2 Existing literature and theory

This chapter is a collection of existing literature and theoretical aspects that can help illuminate and contextualize the new information this thesis will bring forward. The point is to see previous academic work in relation to my specific topic. Such a connection is necessary to paint a proper picture on the phenomenon I am describing, and to help the reader to keep track of the context this thesis is written within. I want to add new information to a well-studied academic field, and this chapter is needed to make this connection. To begin with, I will define and discuss the term “insurgency” and its correlation to politics and political goals. Secondly, I will explain different strategies that insurgencies can use to reach such goals. Gaining *support* and *legitimacy* will be central in the argument. Thirdly, I will theoretically discuss how insurgencies can gain support and legitimacy, and emphasize how international media can be essential in this process. The extension of that argument will lead to a discussion on the power of media, the role of journalists in war, and how media can affect both a conflict and foreign policy-making. I believe this theoretical argument, as a whole, will help explain what happened in Libya during the armed uprising, and illuminate my findings in a proper manner.

2.1 Types of insurgency

Why do people rise up? Ted R. Gurr claims that although there are an infinite variety of motives for rebellion, the key motivational factor arises when people perceive a ‘discrepancy between the goods and conditions of life they believe are their due, and the goods and conditions they can in fact get and keep’ (Gurr in Brooker, 2010: 182). Gurr emphasizes that this “relative deprivation is related to aspirations that are perceived to be realistic and attainable” (ibid.). It is not about what they have and what they want, it is about what they have and what they believe they are capable of attaining. With this in mind I find it reasonable to start out broad, to understand the core of insurgency. In his most famous book, one of the most influential theorist on warfare, Carl von Clausewitz pointed out two definitions central for understanding warfare at large, but also essential for grasping a phenomenon with many names: “stateless warfare”, “irregular warfare” and “insurgency”. Clausewitz wrote that we should imagine a pair of wrestlers. Each tries through physical force to throw his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance. War is thus an act of force to compel our

enemy to do our will (Clausewitz, 1976:75). To be more precise he added that “war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried out with other means (...) The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it” (ibid: 87). These other means are now commonly specified as organized violence (Brooker, 2010:11). These definitions of war can be used as a point of departure for understanding my topic, the irregular type of stateless warfare, most usually known as *insurgency*. Many have of course mentioned Clausewitz when speaking of insurgency before me: At the height of the period of insurgency known as the ‘wars of national liberation’ (1962-1965), journalist Robert Taber, who had spent time in Cuba during the revolution there, said: “The guerrilla fighter’s war is political and social, his means are at least as political as they are military, his purpose almost entirely so. Thus we may paraphrase Clausewitz: *Guerrilla war is the extension of politics by means of armed conflict*” (Baylis, 2010: 186). One of the most influential guerrilla theoreticians is Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara himself. He too sees guerrilla war as political. In his book *Guerrilla Warfare* he writes:

Why does the guerrilla fighter fight? We must come to the inevitable conclusion that the guerrilla fighter is a social reformer, that he takes up arms responding to the angry protest of the people against their oppressors, and that he fights in order to change the social system that keeps all his unarmed brothers in ignominy and misery (Guevara, 1961: 10).

Insurgency is a broad term, and should be discussed and defined in order to avoid misunderstandings: The Oxford English Dictionary defines insurgency as “One who rises in revolt against constituted authority; a rebel who is not recognized as a belligerent.” For J. Kiras (Baylis 2010: 188) insurgency is best understood by first considering what it is not. Insurgency is not conventional war or terrorism, for example, but shares the use of force to achieve a political end. In an insurgency, the adversaries are asymmetric and the insurgents are the weaker part, and almost always a sub-state group attempting to bring about political change by administrating and fighting more effectively than its state-based foe. Insurgency, unlike terrorism, is characterized by support and mobilization of a significant proportion of the population (ibid.) Kiras stress that insurgency is a broad term, and differ widely in terms of character (social, cultural and economic) and type (revolutionary, partisan, guerrilla, liberation, or civil war), but obtaining power and political control is the desired outcome.

Categorizing insurgency into three main, general types has long been the conventional wisdom among analysts of insurgency. Paul Brooker labels them as *expeller*, *revolutionary*

and *separatist*. One can categorize them by asking: “What are the insurgency’s goals and how is organized violence being used to achieve them?” (Brooker, 2010: 34). According to Brooker the word ‘expeller’ is an “appropriate label for all insurgencies fighting to expel a foreign state that is invading, occupying or colonially ruling an insurgent’s nation, religious community, local community or other traditionally or ideologically defined ‘home’” (ibid: 35). The expeller type has been the most common of the three. The separatist type of insurgency has a desire to separate from the local state and establish an independent state. The type includes not only secessionist groups seeking a fully independent state but also those groups that are merely seeking some regional autonomy for their distinctive ethnic or social group (ibid.). The revolutionary type of insurgents is seeking to overthrow their local state or create a new form of state and society.

2.2 Strategy: Time, space, legitimacy and support

Those undertaking an insurgency are trying to find a way to use their strengths, such as mobility and organization, against the weakness of their more powerful adversary. The goal for the irregular leader is to pit the organization’s strength against enemy weakness (Kiras in Baylis: 2010: 189). Scholars seem to agree on what these strengths are: Insurgents are able to achieve success by gaining an advantage in terms of four main dimensions: *time*, *space*, *legitimacy* and *support*. Kiras points out that these dimensions of conflict are not mutually exclusive, and “excellence in one dimension will not compensate for drastic shortcomings in the others” (ibid.). However, because every conflict has its own unique setting and specific characteristics, the importance of the different dimensions changes from insurgency to insurgency. In this thesis, because of the approach I have chosen to take in the study of the Libyan rebels, legitimacy and support are the two most important dimensions. They are most interesting and important to my focus, as ‘time’ and ‘space’ are mostly related to military and fighting strategy, while ‘legitimacy’ and ‘support’ are more related to the information and media effects of the insurgency. I will only briefly sketch the first two dimensions, while dealing more thoroughly with the two latter.

Time has historically been an essential factor in many insurgencies. With sufficient time, an insurgent group can organize, sap the resolve of its adversary, and build a conventional force capable of seizing control of the state (Baylis, 2010: 189). As Henry Kissinger famously has pointed out, “the insurgent wins if he does not lose” (Mack, 1975: 178). Mao organized time

in his writings into three interrelated phases: the strategic defense, the stalemate, and the strategic offensive. Also, as some will say we have seen in Afghanistan (Baker, 2011), endless struggle without an obvious victory will eventually lead to exhaustion, collapse, or withdrawal of the enemy (Baylis, 2010: 189). *Space* allows insurgent groups to decide where and when to fight. If their adversary appears in overwhelming numbers, insurgents can make use of space to withdraw and fight when the odds are in their favor. Defenders against subversion cannot be everywhere at the same time without spreading their forces too thinly and inviting attack from locally superior guerrilla forces (ibid: 190). Because of this, insurgents are provided with the opportunity to establish safe areas or bases from which they can expand their control.

2.3 Importance of legitimacy and support

In this thesis *legitimacy* and *support* is at the centre of what I want to investigate. The importance of these two dimensions for an insurgency can hardly be overestimated. Insurgents are weaker militarily than their powerful nation-state adversary, and their ability to recruit and mobilize the masses is a critical part of their asymmetric warfare strategy. This is a fundamental vulnerability, if it does not work (Forest 2009: xi). According to Kiras, external physical and moral support for an insurgent cause is a prerequisite for success (ibid:188). Regardless of space and time, “an insurgent campaign will almost always fail if it cannot attract substantial internal and external support”. As Kiras states, few insurgencies succeed without some form of support. Support, however, is interlinked with and inseparable from the legitimacy of the organization, because violence conducted without a comprehensible political purpose will generate little popular support (ibid: 192).

Insurgents often seek to legitimize their use of violence and translate this into meaningful support for their cause, by demonstrating moral superiority over those who represent the state. As Kiras says, moral superiority of the guerrillas is a cornerstone of all irregular theory. Insurgents derive support from the people and they often cultivate their relationship with them. Internally, one of the most important jobs for the insurgents is to demonstrate the moral superiority in routine contact, so that people differentiate the insurgents from bandits and counter-insurgents (Baylis, 2010:193). The revolutionary Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara insisted that the peasants understood that the guerrillas were as much social reformers as they were protectors of the people (Guevara, 1961:10). Government brutality also allows insurgents to

act as the avengers of the people, helping to cement the ties between them. Still, the most powerful method of legitimizing a struggle is to link military operations with a justifiable political end. Causes vary, but self-determination has been the most pervasive and successful rallying cry. Other successful causes blend social, cultural and economic issues into a powerful political message that the government or an international audience find difficult to counter or resist (Baylis, 2010:195).

With legitimacy at hand, one can achieve support. Insurgents can look for support from both domestic (internal) and international (external) sympathizers. I will start with discussing the importance of internal support. As Carl von Clausewitz suggested: “Support, in form of public opinion, is one of the centers of gravity in a popular uprising.” It is essential to have the peoples support, and Mao’s much quoted argument about internal support says exactly that: “The guerrilla is likened to fish that swim in a sea of popular support: without the sea, the fish will die.” (quoted in Baylis: 192). As an insurgency goes on, this type of vital popular support can be both passive and active (Brooker: 2010: 175). Passive support is merely the denying of information to the insurgents’ enemy, namely a state’s counterinsurgency forces. Information is a crucial aspect of counterinsurgent capability and therefore the denial of this information, by the population, greatly increases the insurgents’ military capability. Active support is quite different. It helps provide information, intelligence, concealment (in their homes), shelter, hiding places for arms and equipment, medical assistance, guides, and liaison agents. Such help can be of vital importance for an insurgency (ibid: 176). The insurgents’ support base also provides human assistance as a recruiting base from which new recruits come forward and join the rebellion. Che Guevara wrote that guerrilla war is people’s war; to attempt to carry out such a war without the population’s support is the prelude for inevitable disaster (Guevara: 1961: 143).

External support can be seen, as said, as a prerequisite for success. Such support can be material, in form of cross-boarder sanctuaries and weapons support, or moral, in the case of political recognition and lobbying (Baylis, 2010:193). History has shown that insurgencies aggressively pursue external aid, using sophisticated approaches; they seek to influence the media, NGOs, and broader public. In “Marketing of a Rebellion” Clifford Bob writes that insurgents do “nothing more than their opponents – governments, multinational corporations, and international financial institutions, with huge resources and privileged access to the international press. But where the powerful buy the world’s best public relations machines,

the insurgents must bootstrap themselves to the fore” (Bob, 2005: 23). Raising international awareness is the key. For many insurgencies this is the first major obstacle, and the marketing often happens in direct competition with its domestic foe. Alongside lobbying, using the international press is crucial to spread the word about the insurgencies’ activities (ibid.). Journalistic reporting has unparalleled reach, and a compelling account in a reputable outlet can alert uninformed audiences to a distant conflict (more on that later). Most local insurgencies have little resources, and frequent and relatively cheap strategies can be political spectacle, a major and highly visible event. Common forms of such spectacle include strikes, mass marches or violence. Violence often attracts media more effectively than peaceful events (ibid: 26). Whether violent or nonviolent, the key is to grab media attention and dramatically encapsulate the rebels identity, grievances, and demands. Without such spectacle, the likelihood of sustained and substantial media attention is small. Bob, who has studied how insurgent groups reach out for external support, says they use several tactics to form their message to distant audiences: They simplify and universalize their conflicts, and demonize prominent opponents, embrace vogueish rhetoric, and appeal to the self-interest—as well as the sympathy—of international actors. According to Bob, insurgents, as a first step, strip their conflict of complexity and ambiguity, projecting a clear picture of an important struggle against a villainous foe (ibid: 30). At a deeper level, movements tap into cultural motifs having wide and perhaps universal appeal, such as good guy versus bad guy or underdog versus bully. While they play on their repression, these insurgencies emphasize their organizational coherence and their courage, rather than their helplessness.

2.4 Propaganda

The terms propaganda and psychological operations (PSYOPS) is also necessary to take into account. Insurgents as well as governments can use such methods as an essential part of their strategy. In its most neutral sense propaganda means to disseminate or promote particular ideas. The definition that now is most widely used is presented in Garth Jowett and Victoria O’Donnell’s book ‘Propaganda and Persuasion’. Their definition focuses on the communication process – most specifically on the purpose of the process:

“Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (Jowett and O’Donnell, 1999: 6).

It is here emphasized that the propaganda is the result of a consciously and well-planned strategy with a clear aim from the propagandist. Under the term propaganda also follows three categories: Black, white and gray propaganda. Black propaganda is credited to a false source and spread lies, fabrications, and deceptions. It is the 'big lie', including all types of creative deceit (ibid: 13). The white type comes from a source that is identified correctly, and the information of the message tends to be accurate. It is still important to note that although what the audience get is close the truth, it is presented in a manner that attempts to convince the audience that the sender is the good guy with the best ideas and best political ideology. White propaganda attempts to build credibility with the audience, because this can become useful at some point in the future (ibid). Gray propaganda is naturally somewhere in the middle. The source may or may not be correctly identified, and the accuracy of the information is uncertain. Propaganda is closely related to the term psychological operations (PSYOPS): "It is efforts to convey selected truthful information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of their governments, organizations, groups, and individuals" (Forest, 2009: 10).

This strategy of war is well known in history, also by insurgencies. In an article from July 2007, Economist noted that in the new asymmetric wars "the hand-held video camera has become as important a tool of insurgency as the AK-47 or the RPG rocket-launcher". It is interesting to point out how one of the most brutal irregular fighting groups in the world, al-Qaida, see the importance of pictures and videos. At the time of writing, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was number two in the terrorist organization and said: "More than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media." Or as one *jihadi* magazine wrote: "Film everything; this is good advice for all mujahideen. Brothers, don't disdain photography. You should be aware that every frame you take is as good as a missile fired at the Crusader enemy and his puppets" (Economist: 2007). Insurgent groups do not always have to take their own videos and pictures. If lucky, they can get journalists to do it for them.

Another insurgent group that used information in their guerrilla tactics was the Zapatistas in the southern Mexico (EZLN). Analysis has suggested that the group's use of internet in the uprising define the EZLN as the world's "first informational guerrilla movement". (Castells, in Turner, 2005) However, it is possible to question the effect of such tactics. While the use of information-age technology to stimulate international support can be a useful strategy for many contemporary social struggles, "it does not guarantee the procurement of significant

political, economic and social change” (Turner: 2005). After more than a decade of struggle, the Zapatista-guerilla has not caused the radical reconstruction of the Mexican political system that they had hoped for.

2.5 Journalism and the CNN effect

What power lies within journalism in relation to war? Todd Gitlin lines up the following logic when explaining what power the media can have on individuals: People directly know only tiny regions of social life; their beliefs and loyalties lack deep tradition. Because of this people have a major vulnerability to rumor, news and trends. In lack of deep knowledge, for instance in international relation and conflicts, people are pressed to rely on mass media for bearings in an “obscure and shifting world” (Gitlin, 2003: 1). The media bring a manufactured public world into the private space, Gitlin argue, and people find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, for emotional charges, for a recognition of public values, for symbols in general, and even for language. He continues: “Of all the institutions of daily life, the media specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness – by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility and their centralized symbolic capacity” (ibid.). Further he argues that every day, “directly and indirectly, by statement and omission, with pictures and words, (...) the mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifested and concrete.” In the context of war, the logical inference that follows this argument is that media organizations have a major opportunity to create and shape a population’s image of a given war, and the popular impression about the people that is fighting in it. In lack of other types of information, journalism often is the only source, and thus it becomes powerful.

A criticism of how this power is used comes forth in an analysis on today’s mainstream journalism from conflict zones, by Johan Galtung, where he diagnoses the reporting as violence-oriented (Lynch, McGoldrick 2005: 6). He says that a majority of war journalism focuses on the conflict arena, where there are two parties, and their sole goal is to ‘win’. He further argues that the mainstream war reporting sees war as a zero-sum game, where the space and time is closed, and the causes and exits of war are within the arena. Galtung argues that the reporting supports a dehumanization of the enemy and that it is reactive; it is waiting for violence before reporting. It focuses only on the visible effects of violence, like killed,

wounded and material damage (ibid.). Basically he claims that most journalism from conflict areas is simplified and stripped of complexity.

Gitlin's argument shows how individuals are affected by media power, but societies and politics can be affected as well. A theoretical term called the "CNN effect" has over the last decades been used in discussion about such potential power. During the 1980s the proliferation of new technologies transformed the potential of the news media to provide a constant flow of global real-time news. Tiananmen Square in Beijing, the collapse of communism symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the Gulf war became major media events communicated to Western audiences instantaneously via TV news media (Robinson 1999: 301). During this period the question was being asked as to what extent this media pervasiveness had impacted upon governments, particularly the process of foreign policy-making. The new technologies appeared to reduce the scope for calm deliberation over policy, forcing policy-makers to respond to whatever issue journalists focused on (ibid.). The phrase 'CNN effect' encapsulated the idea that real-time communications technology could provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to global events. There has been a growing and heated debate on this phenomenon since it was first brought forth, and also a growing amount of literature. In "Clarifying the CNN effect" Steven Livingston claims that the growing literature suggests at least three conceptually distinct and analytically useful understandings of media's effect on the foreign policy process. We may speak of the CNN effect as 1) an accelerant to policy decision-making, 2) an impediment to the achievement of desired policy goals, and 3) a policy agenda-setting agent (Livingston 1997:2). Here is what the three effects mean:

"Media as an accelerant" mean that one of the potential effects of global, real-time media is the shortening of response time for decision-making. During time of war, live, global television offer potential security-intelligence risks. Decisions are made in haste, sometimes dangerously so. Former U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker highlights this understanding of the CNN effect. "The one thing it does," he says, "is to drive policymakers to have a policy position. I would have to articulate it very quickly. You are in a real-time mode. You don't have time to reflect" (Livingston, 1997: 3). What is often overlooked, however, is the constructive role played by the real-time, global media. Using media can be a diplomacy method of sending signals and statements to other leaders. It constructs a real-time diplomacy, and it is visible in most foreign policy issues to receive media attention (ibid).

According to Livingston there are at least two types of media-related policy impediments. Firstly, one is emotional: Grisly coverage may undermine the morale in the population to continue the war. During the Vietnam War it was called the Vietnam Syndrome: The concern that media coverage had the potential to undermine public support for an operation and erode troop morale on the ground. As such, American credibility and resolve in the world was undermined. In October 1993, pictures of a dead American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, revived some of the same effect (ibid: 4). Secondly, it can be a threat to operational security. The fact remains that some operations are extremely sensitive to media exposure. Maintaining operational security during conventional war and tactical operations is essential. In these circumstances, media have the technological capacity to hinder some types of operations simply by exposing them.

The part of the CNN effect, where media as an agenda-setter, is seen when emotional, compelling coverage of atrocities or humanitarian crises reorder foreign policy priorities. James Baker has said:

“All too often, television is what determines what is a crisis. Television concluded the break-up of the former Yugoslavia and the fighting in the Balkans was a crisis, and they began to cover it and cover it. And so the Clinton administration was left to find a way to do something. Yet they didn’t do that in Rwanda where the excesses were every bit as bad, if not worse.” (Livingston, 1997:6)

Agents for the agenda-setting theory argue that the choices and selections of national interests are too heavily weighted in favour of what happens to get covered by CNN or other media. The argument is that press, for a variety of commercial and professional reasons, is drawn to the dramatic visuals found in most humanitarian emergencies. “The pitched battles between gun-totting teenagers in the streets of some far away place, massive flows of refugees, the pathos of a starving child, all make for compelling television and news” (ibid). This can of course be seen as criticism of governments that just follow the news to satisfy worried domestic media consumers, but it can also be seen as a criticism of the media itself.

The CNN effect-theory is much debated because of the lack of hard evidence of the effect of media in a given foreign policy event. Livingston claims different policies obviously has different objectives, actual and potential costs, and operational requirements. As a result, the level of interest media shows, and the potential consequence of that interest, varies substantially (Livingston, 1997:15). Piers Robinson have used six case studies of humanitarian interventions to test the link between media coverage and policy decision

making, including conflicts in Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, which lead him to conclude that the effects of media coverage are only one of a series of factors contributing to policy decisions (Walters, 2004). We cannot know for certain what kind of response media coverage will have on a given conflict, it can both be strong and weak, but the notion of a potential CNN effect is certainly important to have in mind.

3 Background

This chapter puts the Libyan rebel movement's actions into a proper context. Even though many rebel groups' actions theoretically can be placed in the same category and seen as similar, each conflict is unique and has its own setting. To help explain the roots of rebellion, and the Libyan rebels' choices during the war, background and history should be taken into account. In this chapter I will present what I believe is the relevant context to illuminate. I will firstly point out some essential facts about Libya's physical, human and economic terrain, as well as the country's modern political history with Muammar Gaddafi 42 years long reign. Secondly, and indeed most importantly, I will discuss how the Arab Spring came to Libya and ended in a full-blown rebellion. Here it is needed to go through the key moments and military battles of the eight months long war, the formation of the National Transitional Council (NTC) and the UN-legalized and NATO-led intervention. My informants are naturally explaining their actions in connection with the timeline of the war, and with a proper presentation of this period it will be easier to understand the conditions my informants have acted in. I will here also map the level of external support the Libyan rebels received during the revolution, and discuss how vital the support may have been for the outcome. This is important in order to understand *why* the rebels did what they could to influence the outside world's attitude towards them, via the media.

3.1 Physical, human terrain and economy

Libya occupies a strategic location along the Mediterranean coast, sharing borders with six other African countries. With its 1760 square kilometers it is the fourth largest country in the continent, but because the Sahara desert covers more than 95 % of the country, and therefore most of it is uninhabitable, more than 90 % of Libya's six million people live along the Mediterranean coast (CIA, 2011). Traditionally Libya has been divided into three distinct regions, namely Cyrenaica to the east, Tripolitania in the northwest, and Fezzan in the southwest. The three regions have historically been relatively separate and autonomous (Vandewalle 2006: 11). Vast stretches of desert between the regions inhibited integration for centuries. Thus, the regions developed separate political and economic identities. Enmity between Cyrenaica and Tripolitania, dominated by their respective capital cities Benghazi and Tripoli, has grown since the independence from Italy in 1951, as both regions struggled for

control of national leadership (Bell et.al, 2011, part 1: 15). Despite increasing political centralization between the territories that began under Ottoman rule and continued under Gaddafi, regionalism remains a defining feature of Libyan politics (ibid.). Cyrenaica served as the seat of power for the monarch King Idris, who ruled Libya from independence in 1951 to 1969, when Gaddafi seized power in a military coup. Of central importance to understand parts of the conflict in Libya, the Institute of the Study of War assess that “the stark contrast between the strength of the rebellion in Cyrenaica and the relative degree of loyalty to the regime across much of Tripolitania and Fezzan reveal the underlying political dynamics that shaped the conflict in Libya” (Ibid: 15). The degree of hostility towards Gaddafi’s regime in the east may have been some of the roots that made the rebellion possible.

Libya’s vast economic resources should also be kept in mind while analyzing the war in Libya. Decades of rapid oil-fuelled growth transformed Libya from one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world into one of the wealthier countries in Africa and the Arab World. The Libyan economy depends almost entirely upon revenues from the oil sector, which contribute about 95 % of export earnings, 25 % of GDP, and 80 % of government revenue. In 2010 the country produced 1.8 million barrels per day, and has one of the continent’s largest proven oil reserves at 43.7 billions barrels (CIA, 2011).

3.2 Gaddafi, tribes, allegiance and military

As well as regionalism, the complex tribal system of Libya must also be seen as a factor of major significance in Libyan politics and society. There are about 140 tribes in the country, but only 30 of them is said to have political influence (Spiegel Online, 2011). After taking power in 1969, Gaddafi began to utilize the tribal system as a means of building support, reinforcing loyalties and awarding patronage. He became a manipulator in the way that he took a carrot-and-stick approach with the tribes. “In other words, tribes that were loyal to the revolutionary regime could expect material privileges, whereas tribes that voiced opposition were punished” (Ibid.). In this authoritarian system no civil society or political organization were permitted other than the regime. In return for absolute loyalty from tribe and family members, tribal leaders and family elders provided the leaders with material benefits and social security. By doing so, Gaddafi divided the Libyan society into those who were friends and those who were foes. Members of certain western tribes that closely aligned with Gaddafi were awarded and empowered through high-ranking positions (Mattes, 2011). Most of the

eastern tribes and rival elements of the west such as the Berbers were all excluded from the regime (Bell et.al. Part 1: 17). The weaknesses of such a strategy to keep power for a regime can now, after the revolution, more easily be seen. By excluding some regions and some tribes from privileges and power, the possibilities for these oppressed groups to rebel is increased.

The beginning of this regime came in September 1969, when the 27-year-old captain in the Libyan Air Force, Muammar Gaddafi and his allied in the Free Officers Union, overthrew the Libyan monarch, King Idris. Throughout the 1960s, a number of political incidents reviled the low level of legitimacy the kingdom enjoyed outside Cyrenaica. The revolutionaries had also reviled the inability of King Idris to deal with the highly corrupt patrimonial system that had grown up around him (Vandewalle, 2006: 77). One of the “central pillars of the Gaddafi regime was the revolutionary committees, which served as his political apparatus, evolved into the de facto political party and were granted wide-ranging powers over society. Headquarters were established in every town to seize the leader’s authority” (Bell et. al, Part 1: 22). For a great part the 42 year long period Gaddafi controlled the country, he relied on a highly personalized network of advisors and associates to run the regime and ensure the loyalty of those around him. As mentioned it consisted of loyal tribe members, many from his very own Gaddafa tribe, extended family members and a handful of trusted military officers and old friends from the Free Officers Union (Ibid: 21). As his eight children began to come of age during the 1990s several of them began to take on increasingly powerful roles in the government, the military and their fathers inner circle (ibid.). Over the last decades it became clear that his second eldest son, Saif al Islam Gaddafi, emerged as the most powerful of them and one of the strongest men in the regime.

During the years in power, Gaddafi continuously faced a dilemma of needing a strong military to maintain power while the military, through coups and rebellion, posed the greatest threat to his rule (Bell et. al, Part 1: 22). Therefore, Gaddafi took deliberate precautions to protect his rule from the military by keeping it relatively small, poorly trained and ill equipped so it could not stage a coup (ibid.) He prevented aggression of the military units by parting them into divisions and corps formations, limiting force levels to brigade and battalion size. He also frequently shuffled the positions of senior officials according to their political loyalties and tribal allegiances. To further counterbalance the threat from the military, he built smaller, separate paramilitary forces that were more manageable and loyal the regular army

(ibid.). By 2010 the Libyan armed forces had approximately 76,000 personnel: 50,000 in the army, 18,000 in the Air Force and 8,000 in the Navy (Cordesman and Nerguizian: 2010). This was the military power that the Libyan rebels, from the start of the uprising, had to face and challenge.

3.3 The Arab spring and first stages of the civil war

Before the Libyan revolution started, the so-called Arab spring was on fire. Massive popular demonstrations had forced Tunisia's president Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali to leave power in January, and Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak to step down in early February. Though there were no significant protests in Libya during January, Gaddafi's attempt to support these two autocratic rulers indicated that he was aware that the wave of unrest could sweep into Libya. (Bell et. al: 24) As the first protest started in mid-February in the eastern part of the country, in Cyrenaica's capital Benghazi, it quickly spread to other eastern cities. These demonstrations were undoubtedly influenced by the uprisings in the neighboring countries. At the 15th of February the regime arrested the human rights activist Fethi Tarbel, who had worked to free political prisoners, as a part of a nationwide effort to detain anti-regime activists. The arrest triggered a massive protest (Reuters, 2011). Hundreds gathered outside the police station, and a number of protesters were killed. Protests two days later, on the 17th, became significant. It was the "day of revolt", an effort to bring thousands of protesters into the streets. Major demonstrations were reported in the cities of Benghazi, Ajdabiya, Darnah and Zintan, among others. Gaddafi forces responded by firing live ammunition at the crowds. More than a dozen demonstrators were killed (Al-Jazeera, 2011). A turning point in the early revolt came on the 20th, when protesters managed to attack and siege the central military compound within Benghazi, the same time as the interior minister and former Army officer, Abdel Fattah Younis, defected with his security force. The defection turned the momentum in eastern part of the country, and was also a major propaganda victory for the rebels (Bell et. al: 25). Another dramatic defection came soon after, when Libya's UN delegation said they sided with the revolt and called on the Libyan army to help overthrow Gaddafi (Reuters, 2011). The protesters in the east quickly armed themselves to fight Gaddafi's forces, in what would become an eight months long civil war, a full-blown rebellion with advance, stalemate and retreat, until the rebels marched on towards Tripoli and took control in the middle of August. I will not outline the whole timeline of war, but mention the most significant moments.

3.4 The formation of NTC

One significant moment, and important background for this thesis, is the formation of the National Transitional Council (NTC). When cities fell to the rebellion in the east, provisional councils, staffed by local educated professionals, were quickly organized in many of the eastern cities to provide basic services. But the development of an overarching governing council occurred at the same time, as former regime officials and recently returned expatriates formed a movement of political leadership in Benghazi (Bell et. al: 28). After meetings in Benghazi and other cities, the NTC's announcement of the new political formation was made. Support was essential for the new organizations, and two former regime officials, Mahmood Jibril and Ali Al Issawi, were appointed to be foreign affairs representatives and tasked with securing international support. In late March, NTC published a document entitled "A vision of a democratic Libya." It is clearly inspired by Western constitutional democracies. As an example:

"...we will outline our aspirations for a modern, free and united state, following the defeat of the illegal Gaddafi regime." And "We have learnt from the struggles of our past during the dark days of dictatorship that there is no alternative to building a free and democratic society and ensuring the supremacy of international humanitarian law and human rights declarations." And " (...) lead us to a civil society that recognizes intellectual and political pluralism and allows for the peaceful transfer of power through legal institutions and ballot boxes; in accordance with a national constitution crafted by the people and endorsed in a referendum" (NTC, 2011).

According to an analysis by the Institute for the Study of War, the opposition movement's need to secure the political and military support of Western countries likely influenced this growing modern political identity. The rapid creation of a central leadership, featuring expatriates that had spent much time in the West, gave the appearance of an organized movement that was sympathetic to the U.S and Europe. "Additionally, the subsequent release of a plan for a secular, liberal democracy signaled to its potential Western patrons that the rebels had an acceptable political identity" (Bell et.al: 28).

3.5 International reactions and intervention

Soon after the first protest became international news, and it was clear that Gaddafi used violence to stop the demonstrations, the first international reactions came. In late February, because Russia and China was willing to back limited actions, the U.N. Security Council

imposed sanctions on Gaddafi and his family, with resolution 1970, and referred Libya's crackdown on rebels to the International Criminal Court. At the same time EU governments approved a package of sanctions against Gaddafi and his closest advisers including an arms embargo and bans on travel to the Europe (Reuters, 2011). In early March France was the first state to recognize the National Transitional Council as the legitimate representative of Libya's people. But this was not enough to stop the violence. The situation on the ground deteriorated for the rebels, as their advance was pushed back as Gaddafi launched offensives against the rebels in Misrata and Cyrenaican cities (Bell et. al, part 2: 7). Soon the stronghold Benghazi could fall. The international debate to take military actions against Gaddafi intensified following the passage of the resolution 1970. Britain and France led the charge, and the U.S joined. Still, some U.S officials were reluctant to back a potential no-fly zone because of the lack of comprehensive intelligence about the situation on the ground. Some was also worried that there was little understanding of the background and dispositions of the rebels, and expressed concern that some elements could have ties to al-Qaeda affiliates (ibid: 17). The famous French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy went to Benghazi early in the uprising and lobbied for an intervention and had direct talks with president Nicolas Sarkozy (Al-Arabiya, 2012). By March 15th UN's position on military actions remained unsettled, but time was running short. The loyalist forces' advance seemed to soon retake Benghazi, and if so, there would hardly be any opposition left for UN to throw their support behind. Gaddafi's son Saif al-Islam told France-based TV channel Euronews: "Everything will be over in 48 hours." (Euronews, 2011) Gaddafi himself said: "We will come zenga, zenga. House by house, room by room." ... "It's over. The issue has been decided," Gaddafi said, offering pardon to those who lay down their arms. "We are coming tonight...We will have no mercy and no pity with them" (The Atlantic Wire, 2011). Finally, the UN acted. On March 17th the Security Council voted to authorize Resolution 1973. It granted member states the authority to use "all necessary measures" to protect Libyan civilians under threat of attack from Libyan military forces. It also allowed the imposition of a no-fly zone, a strict arms embargo, freezing the regime's assets, and travel ban on Libyan officials, but prohibited ground forces from occupying Libyan territory (UN, UNSCR 1973). French warplanes started enforcing the resolution by attacking Gaddafi's forces on the outskirts of Benghazi on the 19th of March. After a no-fly zone was established over the eastern part of the Libya, attacks on Gaddafi's ground forces gradually expanded over the rest of the country. As the fighting continued, the administration moved swiftly to transfer command to NATO, in order to minimize the U.S

role and allow Britain and France to take the lead. 14 of NATO's 28 members participated in the operation: Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Spain, Turkey, and the United States. Four non-members also joined: Sweden, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Bell et. al, part 2: 27). This massive amount of support for the Libyan rebels did not stop there. Domestic and international political considerations seemed to limit the extent of support many NATO members could provide the rebels, but Qatar supported the rebels in a bolder way. It provided political, military and economic support. For example the country made the single largest monetary pledge to the NTC, offering \$400 to \$500 million that the rebels could spend as needed (Ibid: 30). This financial support was critical to the rebels. The small oil-state Qatar also provided fuel to the rebel-held east, shipping gasoline, diesel and propane to Benghazi to supply the uprising. War supplies was also sent. The first reports of Qatari military equipment in rebel hands appeared in mid-April (Bell et. al part 3: 15, and McCaltshy, 2011). These shipments, consisting of bulletproof vests, helmets, and ammunition, were bound for the rebels besieged in Misrata. Qatari Prime Minister al Thani stated that assistance to the rebels could include "all other need, including defense equipment (...). It is time to help the Libyan people to defend themselves and to defend the Libyan people" (Washington Times, 2011). Qatar also sent military trainers to Libya to teach basic soldering and infantry tactics to volunteers outside Benghazi.

During the intervention in the Libyan conflict NATO's warplanes flew more than 26,000 sorties, including 9600 strike missions. More than 1000 tanks, vehicles and guns were destroyed, along with Gaddafi's command and control network. How many government soldiers died, is unknown (NATO in BBC, 2011). According to New York Times' (2011) investigations, at least 40 civilians, and perhaps more than 70, were killed by NATO's attacks. The victims, including at least 29 women or children, often had been asleep in homes when the ordnance hit (ibid.). Institute of the Study of War researchers claim that while the international intervention in Libya succeeded in preventing the rebels from falling to Gaddafi's forces in the spring of 2011, it by no means brought about a quick end to the conflict. But NATO played a vital role in preventing Misrata's fall to the regime as well as strengthening the rebels' hold over eastern Libya (Bell et. al, Part 2: 30).

3.6 Western popular support of intervention

In the context of the UN mandated military intervention in Libya, it is also central to discuss what level of support the Libyan rebels were given by the population in the Western countries. How did normal Western media consumers see the Libyan rebels' struggle, which they were presented almost every day? Did the rebels' message to journalists, about who they were and what they wanted, affect the media consumer's thoughts? Surveys about the popular opinion conducted in the different Western states, can give some answers:

Norway was one of the first states to declare willingness to participate with fighter jets, if a UN resolution were to be signed. Norway was also one of the states that were most active in the bombing of Libya. During the four months the country participated, their six fighter jets dropped 569 bombs on Libyan soil. (Aftenposten, 2011) This made the American president Barack Obama thank Norway for their efforts. "Norway boxes above its weight class", Obama said. (Nettavisen, 2011) A survey by the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten in April showed that as much as 70 percent of the respondents thought it was right by the Norwegian government to participate in the military intervention. The survey shows a broad support by voters in all political parties from rightwing to the leftwing. (Aftenposten, 2011) About the same time as the survey in Norway was conducted, Ipsos polling conducted a survey in Great Britain, USA, France and Italy. It showed that the public clearly had mixed feelings about the involvement in Libyan affairs, but most were in favor of it. In Great Britain 50 percent of the population supported the military action, in USA 55 percent, in France 63 percent, and in Italy 40 percent. But when the polling organization ask about this statement: "The UK/US/French/Italian and allied forces should seek to remove Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi" the popular view was stronger in favor: 63 percent of the British, 71 percent of the Americans, 67 percent of the French, and 76 percent of the Italian believed Gaddafi should be removed by force. (Ipsos polling, 2011) This can be seen as a relatively strong support to the Libyan rebels' prime cause, namely to push Gaddafi to leave power.

3.7 Stalemate, negotiations and end of the conflict

Even with supporting planes in the air, the war on the ground dragged on during the summer and lead to a deadly stalemate. The main battle line went back and forth along the Mediterranean coast, but also in the western mountains along the boarder of Tunisia

(AlJazeera, 2011). The stalemate in Cyrenaica coincided with an increasingly dire siege of the port city of Misrata in eastern Libya, where the uprising threatened Gaddafi's hold over Tripolitania, and thus, the country (Bell et.al, Part 3: 6). Rebel officials estimated that 1500 rebels and civilians were killed and 5000 wounded during the battle of Misrata (New York Times, 2011). At the height of the battle, an estimated 100,000 Misratans fled their homes to safer locations. The fighting damaged the city heavily.

The months of this mutually hurting stalemate made actors on all sides begin to discuss the possibility of negotiating an end to the conflict. But negotiations never made progress. In an analysis on statements given about negotiations during the conflict, as I did as a term paper, I concluded that it was the never-ending stubbornness of the rebel movement, their never-changing principle to throw Gaddafi from power, and the lack of willingness for concessions, that were the main reason why the fall of Gaddafi came with force, rather than negotiations (Bakke Foss, 2011). The reason for their hard bargaining-strategy, I argue, is that even though the time may have been ripe, NTC did not see a satisfying "way out". This is a crucial factor for a negotiation to come underway. Also the hurting stalemate seemed to have given the rebels yet another reason to think that there was "no way back". Furthermore, since the stalemate did not last longer than a few months, a moment of crucial desperation never came (ibid.).

On the night of August the 20th, the battle of Tripoli began. It had been planned for a long time and featured three separate opposition groups acting in close cooperation: rebels based out of the Nafusa Mountains, Misrata, and from within Tripoli. Beforehand, massive weapon support had been given to the rebels. British, French and Qatari special operation forces in Libya provided weapons, fuel, food and medicine to rebels in Tripolitania (New York Times, 2011). Coalition military advisors helped plan the assault using satellite imagery and other intelligence information. France conducted weapon drops in the mountains, and Sudan shipped arms over the border. Qatar alone provided over 20.000 tons of weapons (Bell et.al, Part 4: 22.). Exactly two months after the assault on Tripoli, Gaddafi's final stronghold and birthplace, Sirte, fell. The same day rebel forces captured Gaddafi after engaging his convoy as he fled the city. He was alive—with wounds—but died before reaching the hospital, shot in the head during the ride (Guardian, 2011). On October 21st, NATO announced a preliminary decision to end operations. Six days later the UN Security Council passed a resolution to end its mandate permitting intervention (CNN, 2011). On October 23rd, Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the

leader of the NTC declared the liberation of Libya, eight months after the uprising against Muammar Gaddafi's 42-year rule began (AlJazeera, 2011).

3.8 The rebels' wrongdoings

I will now proceed to describe shortly some of the wrongdoings by the rebels during the revolution. This is important to have in mind while reading this thesis, because the thesis' topic is how the rebels attempted to make a good impression on the world. The lack of control over rebel militias was a challenge for NTC's authority. In July, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that fighters out of the Nafusa Mountains pillaged and destroyed property in several cities. The rebels shall have acknowledged that they were ignoring orders not to loot. Rebel fighters also beat people suspected of being loyalists and burned their homes, the organization said (New York Times, 2011). Later in the conflict, rebels out of Misrata turned their wrath against the nearby town of Twaragha. Opposition fighters looted and torched buildings in the largely deserted town. Even the NTC seemed unwilling to intervene in this matter, as one of the NTC leaders Mahmod Jibril stated: "Nobody has the right to interfere in this matter except the people of Misrata" (Human Rights Watch, 2011). HRW also documented that fifty-three people, apparent Gaddafi supporters, most likely were executed at a hotel in Sirte during the last week of fighting. The hotel was located in an area of the city that was under the control of anti-Gaddafi fighters from Misrata before the killings took place (Human Rights Watch, 2011). Independent militias have also conducted arrests without any oversight. Coupled with the lack of a working judicial system, the influx of new prisoners has forced the rebels to hold more than 7000 detainees in makeshift prisons where Amnesty International found widespread abuse and occasional torture (Bell et.al, Part 4: 26-27). Also, rebel groups have often been targeting black Africans—very common among Libya's migrant worker population—accusing them of serving as mercenaries for the Gaddafi regime (ibid).

4 Method

The main aim of this chapter is to describe and explain the methodology of my research. Firstly, I will present a short summary of why I ended up seeing the qualitative methods, and the research interview, as the most constructive method for this thesis. I will thereafter give a more detailed report of how I carried out my research: Firstly, I will explain the research planning and trip to Libya. Secondly, I will discuss research design and sample. Of special importance is the presentation of how I selected the sample of informants, and who they are. Thirdly, I will explain how I conducted transcription, analysis and verification. This chapter is important, because it is necessary to be transparent about the research process, so the reader understands the process leading up to the conclusion.

4.1 Choice of qualitative research and interview

My research project can be placed under the relatively broad term ‘Case study’. The basic case study entails detailed and intensive analysis of a single case. It is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Bryman, 2008: 52). The most common use of the term ‘case’ associate the case study with a location, such as a community or organization. The emphasis tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting (ibid: 53). Both quantitative and qualitative methods are applicable, but the exponents of the case study design often favor the qualitative methods, such as participant observation and unstructured interviewing, because these methods are viewed as particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive, detailed examination of a case (ibid). There are three main features of qualitative research that should be taken into account. Firstly, it features an inductive view of the relationship between theory and research, whereby the former is generated by the latter (Bryman: 366). Secondly, it has an epistemological position described as interpretivist, meaning that, in contrast to the adoption of a natural scientific model in quantitative research, the stress is on the social world “through an examination of the interpretation of the world by its participants” (ibid). Thirdly, it is often connected to an ontological position described as constructionist, which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena ‘out there’ and separate from those involved in its construction (ibid).

Bryman (2008: 393-394) points out some of the main differences between the quantitative research and the qualitative that are relevant to my research: Qualitative researchers are seen as using words rather than numbers in the analysis of society. In qualitative research, the perspective of those being studied — what they see as important and significant — provides the point of orientation. It is often seen attuned to the unfolding of events over time and to the interconnection between the actions of participants of social settings. The approach is invariably unstructured, something that enhance the possibility of getting the actors' meanings, and emerging concepts, out of the data collection. Whereas quantitative researchers want their findings to be generalizable to the relevant population, the qualitative researcher seeks an understanding of behavior, values, beliefs, and so on in terms of the context in which the research is conducted. Qualitative researchers claim that their contextual approach and their often-prolonged involvement in a setting engender rich data.

When looking at these differences it becomes evident that my research project had to be based on qualitative research. I wanted to investigate actions of a loosely connected organization, in interaction with a quite unique setting, namely a revolution/civil war. A strict survey with a representative sample of the people of Libya would not have given much meaning, in my case. It is a relatively small group I want to investigate. Such an investigation should have a focus on *words* rather than *numbers*, and it is the perspectives, values and beliefs of my informants that are of interest to me. The situation that I am investigating is also not a static one, the revolution was an unfolding event and I seek to understand the group's actions in that given event. Also, an unstructured approach seems needed, because I could not know every interesting aspect of my research before I conducted it. Such an unstructured approach helped me draw out new meanings and concepts while the research was ongoing. Furthermore, it is not mainly generalizable 'truths' I want to search for and find. I do not seek a general finding of how modern rebel groups relate to media issues during a conflict. Such a research project, if possible at all, would have taken far more resources. Rather, I primarily seek an understanding of behavior and beliefs of a particular group of people, in the exact context of the Libyan war. I believe that the choice of using a qualitative approach will generally give me a deeper insight and a richer data content than I could have gotten with quantitative approaches.

The inference of the argument above makes it evident that one of the most fitting qualitative methods to use in this project is the interview. The qualitative research interview attempts "to

understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Kvale, Brinkmann 2009: 1). One form of the research interview— a "semi-structured interview"— is what I mainly will use. The researcher has a list of questions—or fairly specific topics—to be covered, but the interviewee has a great deal of freedom in how to reply. The interview process is flexible. The emphasis is on how the interviewee frames and understands issues and events, like what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns and form of behavior (Bryman: 438).

4.2 Research planning and trip to Libya

In October I started to contact Norwegian journalists I knew had covered the war in Libya. I attended several lectures and conferences where the journalists were speaking. I told them about my project, to see if they thought the topic was something to dig deeper into. They thought so. I also wanted their views on the possibility of going to Libya at that point, about visa and security, and about potential contacts in the community I wanted to investigate. In November I finally got two central names from one of the journalists. I contacted them and received invitation to both Tripoli and Benghazi, and promises that they would set me in contact with everyone I needed. In the post-conflict chaos that Libya was in at the time, the visa system was not working effectively. I called and e-mailed embassies and potential helpers every day for almost two months. Eventually I got a journalist visa, after an editor in Verdens Gang (where I work part time) wrote a letter stating that I needed to go to Libya to work for the newspaper, even though this was not the purpose of the trip. It was basically impossible to enter the country as a student or researcher at the time. This did not lead to any problems during my data collection. My informants knew I was a researcher, not a journalist.

Libya was in a very unstable post-conflict period at the time I planned my trip. The National Transitional Council and the interim government did not have much actual control or power, and an uncountable number of armed militias were in control of different parts of the country. The cities I wanted to visit were divided between different armed groups. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry advised all citizens not to travel. I read all possible news coming out of the country, and I talked extensively with journalists that just had been, or were, in Libya. I figured it was safe enough.

While I waited on the visa process I interviewed journalists that had covered the Libyan conflict. They were based in different places all over the world, like Rome, Amman, Bergen, Jerusalem and New York, thus, the interviews were conducted via Skype. I got in contact with them via e-mail and Facebook. They approved the project and wanted to speak their minds. As I was in London to pick up my visa, one of the most central NTC members was there. I met with him and got contact information to other people with central positions in the NTC Media Committee. From there I went to Benghazi in eastern Libya. Beforehand, I had maintained contact with informants via Facebook (where everyone is) to inform them about my plan. I spent the majority of my time in Benghazi, because most of my informants were based there. As I talked to one informant, I got several more important names. In a short period of time I had interviewed many central and highly relevant informants. When I was finished in Benghazi, I went to Tripoli to finish the interviews. I was in Libya from March 8th until March 21st, 2012.

The security was a constant dilemma. I had a guide that picked me up at the airport in Benghazi and helped me for the first period of time. After a while I could manage my self. I was in one dangerous situation, when I attended and photographed a pro-federalist demonstration in Benghazi. An armed militia attacked the demonstration, panic spread, and I had to flee the shooting. One was killed and five were hurt in the incident. Except that— and aside from the amount of armed people in both cities—I felt relatively safe.

4.3 Design/sample

To the question about how many interview subjects that is needed, Kvale and Brinkman (2009: 113) claims that the answer is simple: “Interview as many subject as necessary to find out what you need to know.” The number of subjects necessary depends on the purpose of a study, but common interview studies tends to be around 15+/-10. This number may be due to a combination of the time and resources available for the investigation and a “law of diminishing returns”. The argument is that beyond a certain point, adding more respondents will produce less and less new knowledge (ibid.). I believe I interviewed the amount of people needed to answer my research question, and I experienced diminishing amount of new facts and aspects towards the end of my data collection. My sample is naturally of purposive art; it is strategic and it is attempting to establish a good correspondence with the research question and the sampling. I used so-called snowball sampling, which Bryman describes as “a non-

probability sample in which the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant for the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others” (Bryman: 699). I had two main contacts, which was highly central for my topic, and when I had interviewed them, they gave me more names and contact information. I made an assessment about the relevance of the names they proposed. I organized the interviewees into three categories: journalists, young activists, and the NTC leadership. The criteria I had for selecting the interviewee was that they were central actors in any of these three categories, and that they could shed relevant light on the topic and give me new information. It was also important that they had relatively different tasks during the conflict, so I could get as much nuance, width and insight as possible.

I will now present my informants. This is important because before I present these 14 people’s opinions and statements, it is essential for the reader to know who they are, why they are relevant, and what they represent. I will start with the journalists: I have conducted interviews with journalists with great experience from the Libyan conflict, journalists who dealt with the rebels extensively. They worked within different types of media, and have together reached out to media consumers in vast parts of the world. I believe they are highly able to illuminate the journalist side of the conflict.

- **Jørgen Lohne** is the Middle East correspondent for the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten. He covered the Arab Spring extensively during 2011, and entered eastern Libya soon after Benghazi had fallen into rebel hands. He was in the country several times during the conflict, also after the fall of Tripoli.
- **André Liohn** is an award winning war photographer and cameraman that have covered several conflicts the last decade. In the beginning of the war he worked for the recognized German magazine Der Spiegel. He also worked for several other respected news organization such as The Guardian and CNN. Liohn was in the heavily bombarded city of Misrata while two of his colleagues, two news photographers, died covering the front line battle in the city.
- **Yama Wolusmal** is a Norwegian war correspondent that covered the Libyan conflict for China’s international 24-hour television network, CCTV. They spent a great amount of resources on the conflict-coverage and Wolusmal made five trips to Libya during the conflict, from the beginning to the end. He also reported for Norwegian TV 2.

- **Stephen Farrell** of the New York Times is an experienced foreign news journalist, and has been a war correspondent for the paper for several years. He has extensive knowledge of insurgencies, and has been kidnapped both by insurgents in Iraq and by the Taliban in Afghanistan. While covering the retreat of the Libyan rebels during the spring of 2011, Farrell and three other colleagues were captured and detained by Gaddafi loyalists. They went missing, and were held captive in Tripoli for six days.
- **Tony Birtley** has been a war correspondent for 25 years and covered the Libyan conflict extensively for Al-Jazeera. He was in Sirte the day Gaddafi was captured and killed, and was the reporter that got the rebel mobile footage of Gaddafi being captured alive right before he was shot. The images and video spread rapidly all over the world.

In the activist category I have interviewed informants that were central in the making and running of the daily work to help and influence journalists, mainly from Benghazi. They are a loosely connected group that worked with international media every day during the conflict. Together they worked broadly to bring the revolution forward.

- **Isha Aftaita and Lina Selbesh** were the first people many journalists met in Benghazi on the day of arrival, as they were some of the leading figures in the downtown Media Centre. Among many tasks, they registered journalists and facilitated the services needed for making reporting easier. They worked voluntarily in the Media Centre during the greatest part of the eight month long conflict.
- **Suliman Ali Zway and Osama Alfitory** used to work in the construction business, but as Benghazi fell they volunteered to help the many journalists arriving to the city. All the way through, they worked as drivers, translators and guides for some of the world's most established foreign correspondents in papers like the New York Times and Washington Post. For their work they were recognized in London in November 2011, as they received The Martin Adler Price. The price aims to give attention to local fixers that help international journalists during reporting.
- **Omar Amer** is a Libyan that lived in Manchester, Britain, when the revolution started. He is the founder of an activist organization named Libyan Youth Movement, which, during the conflict, became one of the major voices of the Libyan people living outside the country. The movement worked as a news agency, intensively feeding international journalists with information during the conflict.

The informants in the third category were members of the NTC during the conflict, and they were the front figures in the Council's daily media effort. They all had leading positions:

- **Mohammed Elkish** was Head of the International Media Unit in the Media and Communication Committee (MCC) for the NTC. He was working with strategic communication, arranging press conferences, training members of the Council to handle media pressure, and such. After Tripoli had fallen into rebel hands he became the Head of the MCC.
- **Abdul Busin** was Head of the Military Media unit, which entailed working with all the information about the rebels' military effort, the situation on the ground, and in the front line. He was also a military spokesman informing the journalists, as well as NATO.
- **Hana Galal** was one of the founding members of the NTC, which attended the first meeting of the Council, and was given the task to create the Media and Communication Committee. She later became the Minister of Education for the Council. She is educated in international law, from the University of Bern, and is a professor at the faculty of law in the University of Benghazi.
- **Jalal Galal** was also an initial member of the NTC, and soon became the head spokesman for NTC. He held that position from the beginning of the revolution until January 2012. When journalists were given comments from the Council, it was mainly Galal's task to handle it.

4.4 Transcription and analysis

The interviews in Libya were conducted in English, in different cafés and offices in Benghazi and Tripoli. Beforehand, I informed the interviewees about my project, how they were going to be used, and whom else I had interviewed. They all agreed to speak with their full name, and put no restrictions on me as a researcher. The interviews were recorded with an audio recorder, and transferred to a computer. They were transcribed the same day as they were conducted. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:180) says transcribing interviews from an oral to a written mode structures the interview conversations in a form amenable to closer analysis, and is in itself an initial analytic process. I transcribed the interviews mostly as a working tool for me as a researcher. I used a formal, written style, and did not write down every single sound the informants made. I made this choice to make the transcriptions more effective to work

with. By transcribing the interviews at once I could start the analytical process early: As I transcribed I highlighted the most important sections of the interview, and filtered more easily out new and important information.

Kvale and Brinkman (2009: 193) say the analysis of an interview is interspersed between the initial story told by the interviewee to the researcher, and the final story told by the researcher to the audience. To analyze means to separate something into parts or elements. After I returned to Norway I printed the transcripts and organized them into the three mentioned categories: Journalists, Activists and NTC-leaders. I read through every transcript in each category, and I found the main topics of the interviews. I made a list of categories like “organization”, “motivation”, “views on external support” etc., and gave each category a number. Then I read through the transcripts again, and numbered the statements and quotes in relation with the different topics. This helped me organize the extensive amount of text, and it made a proper analysis more manageable. The process of coding and categorization is a well-used approach in social sciences. Coding involves “attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of a statement, whereas categorization entails a more systematic conceptualization of a statement” (ibid: 202). The goal is the development of categories that captures the fullness of the experiences and actions studied. When coding takes the form of categorization, the meaning of long interview statements is reduced to a few simple categories, and different phenomenon can occur. This method reduces and structures large interview texts, and can provide a much-needed overview (ibid). This was an important part for my work, and helped me find what I was looking for.

4.5 Verification

The importance and scope of this thesis must not be exaggerated. It is a student’s master’s thesis, and it is a work conducted with the available time and resources. Nevertheless, with this as a starting point, the research can still be useful and valuable. My research project can be seen as a small contribution to the far bigger picture. I add one carefully conducted piece of knowledge. Other researchers must continue to add pieces of information to further develop our knowledge about this field.

There has been some academic discussion concerning the actual relevance of the terms reliability and validity in qualitative research. However, qualitative researchers have tended to

employ the terms in very similar ways to quantitative researchers when seeking to develop criteria for assessing research (Bryman: 377). I use LeCompte's and Goetz's (1982) interpretation of the terms, cited in Bryman (2008), as a framework when I assess my own research.

- *External reliability* can be seen as the degree to which a study can be replicated. This is a difficult criterion to meet in qualitative research, since, as LeCompete and Goetz recognize, it is impossible to 'freeze' a social setting and the circumstances of an initial study to make it replicable. (Ibid: 376). My research in Libya was done in March 2012, at a point where the conflict was just over, and the participants I talked to were willing to contribute with information. The setting of the interviews at the given point in their post-conflict period may have been unique. Many factors may have changed since then. When that is said, I believe a majority of my informants would bring forward much of the same information if the same questions were asked by other researchers again. To make replication easier, and as a move towards transparency, I will attach my interview guides.
- *Internal reliability*, as LeCompete and Goetz see it in relation to qualitative research, means whether, when there is more than one observer, members of the research team agrees about what they see and hear. This was not possible for me. I did the research on my own, I interviewed on my own, and I transcribed and analyzed on my own. To compensate, and to make sure I was not making up my own biased picture of the situation, I continuously talked to relevant actors about my research. For example, I talked to several journalists that were in Libya about my main conclusions and there is, as I see it, a consistency between my findings and the general impression of my research topic.
- *Internal validity*: Validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. The word *trustworthiness* is also applicable. Internal validity is concerned with whether there is a good match between researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas they develop. It is about the credibility of the research (Bryman: 376). LeCompete and Goetz argue that internal validity tends to be a strength of qualitative research, because a deep and broad look into one case allows the researcher to ensure a high level of congruence between concepts and the information that is obtained. The issue of good internal validity in my case mainly has

to do with the relevance and positions of my informants, the quality of the interviews, and my ability to understand and analyze the collected data.

- *External validity*: One question on which a great deal of discussion has been centered concerns the external validity or generalizability of a case study research such as my own. How can a single case possibly be representative so that it might yield findings that can be applied more generally to other cases? (Bryman: 55) The answer, Bryman stresses, is that it cannot. External validity refers to the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings, and may be a problem in qualitative research. My findings and conclusions on the Libyan rebel movement can, detailed and comprehensively, say something about that single case, but it cannot say much about rebel groups' media efforts in general. I can suggest tendencies, and point out which directions further research should look, but it can only confirm aspects within the single case I have examined.

5 Results and analysis

I will now present the results of my research. Because this is a presentation of a unique phenomenon and organization that has not yet been examined broadly, I believe a descriptive analysis of my findings is needed. New information will be seen in the light of existing literature and theory, and in that way the Libyan rebels' actions can be connected to a broader academic picture. Firstly, I will present the journalists assessments of, and experiences with, the Libyan rebels. Their views are a crucial supplement to a critical evaluation. Secondly, I will present the efforts and believes of the young helpers and activists working to provide journalists with whatever they needed during the conflict. Finally, I will present the National Transitional Council's media organizing, their motivations and efforts to influence international media to report in their favor.

5.1 The journalists

It is important to investigate the international journalist's point of view, to see how they experienced and consider the rebels' behavior towards them during the war. This thesis' focus is the Libyan rebels, but interviews with the journalists are central supplements to what the rebels say and claim. In that way I can gain an insight into both perspectives, and thus get a better overview.

In the light of what these journalists have told me, and the theories on insurgencies and news media, I will first discuss the rebels' behavior towards journalists in the first phase of the conflict. Secondly, I will explain how the journalists assess the rebels' media organizing, and thirdly, I will draw out what message and impression they wanted to give the journalists. Lastly, I will discuss what the journalists see as a change in behavior towards the media as the rebels got more power. Attempts on propaganda will also be discussed there.

5.1.1 Rebels' enthusiasm towards journalists

As Clifford Bob writes, raising international awareness is a key to getting legitimacy and support. For many insurgencies this is the first obstacle, and the marketing of a rebellion often happens in a direct competition with its domestic foe. (Bob, 2005: 23). This was clearly the case of the Libyan rebel movement. Even though it was a loosely connected group, and it was

difficult to know who was a “rebel” and who was just supporters, one impression became clear as the journalist entered eastern Libya: They were highly welcome. Many of them entered Libya through the border from Egypt, and travelled west towards Benghazi from there. Along the road they were very popular. Guards welcomed the journalist warmly and waved them across the border. People even hailed them as heroes. Yama Wolusmal said the rebels hoped his team should drive straight to Benghazi to report on the fall of the city. He believes a reason for that is the importance of the city:

“I believe a strong reason for the warm welcome was that many foreign journalists came to report on the fall of Benghazi, and this is a city with great symbolic importance for the rebels. It is the next biggest city and is traditionally known for its resistance against the Gaddafi regime during the 42 years of his rule. The fact that the rebels overthrew the dictator in this city was important for them. It was a great victory that they wanted the world society to see.”

Tony Birtley in Al-Jazeera says that he felt he was some kind of a celebrity. “People greeted us and hugged us, and thanked us for being there. We found nothing but cooperation and help from these people”, he says. This is what Bob deliberates. If raising awareness is a key, journalists are naturally seen as a tool to create this awareness. Showing the victory in Benghazi can be seen as an important first step in the marketing of the rebellion. This showed that they were strong and ambitious. An overwhelming willingness to speak their minds to journalists was also clearly evident. As André Liohn puts it: “It was very interesting to see, because these people had not been able to speak freely in many years, and suddenly they had a huge international media-apparatus in front of them. Everyone had a story to tell, and they wanted to tell it all the time. It was important for them.” Others also point out that at once a journalist pulled out a camera people flocked in front of it.

As said, in his critique of mainstream reporting from conflict zones, Johan Galtung argues that most reporting is violence oriented; it emphasize the visible forms of violence like killing, wounded and material damage. He also argues that journalists often are reactive, waiting for violence before reporting. Bob follow this logic by stating that violence often attracts media more effectively than peaceful events, and that some insurgencies’ strategy can be to create a political spectacle. Common forms are mass marches and violence. The key is to grab media attention and dramatically show the world what is going on. Without such spectacle, Bob argues, the likelihood of sustained and substantial media attention is small. After the first spectacular period had calmed down in Benghazi, the reporting of the frontline

battle began. Many journalists were eager to see the actual fighting against the regime. Also here the rebels showed willingness to help the journalists as much as they could. Rebels in the frontline offered to drive journalists for free, and give them free gasoline and food. Jørgen Lohne says that the rebels were evaluating the security threat in the frontline, and shipped in journalists when they thought it was safe. He was himself driving out with the rebels, at one point. In the beginning of the conflict the rebels were very eager to have journalists in the fighting zone, reportedly they were polite and helpful, and guided the journalists straight into battle. André Liohn experienced how dangerous that could be. He was in Misrata when his colleagues, the photographers Tim Herington and Chris Hondros, died while following a media friendly rebel militia inside the city. Liohn himself came to the besieged city as a passenger on a small fishing boat, shipping in weapons to the rebels. He explains the willingness by the rebels to show their battle to journalists in this way: “I think they did it to show how difficult the fight was. Many of these men were ready to die in the fight against Gaddafi, and why should they not take journalists with them to show this deadly struggle?” One of the main reasons for the comprehensive willingness towards journalists, Wolusmal believes, is Al-Jazeera’s high standing in the Arabic public. The channel covered the Arab spring extensively, and had at most 16 teams inside Libya during the war. Al-Jazeera’s reporter, Tony Birtely, agree.

“We are a huge network, and everyone in the Arab world watches the Arabic version. Al-Jazeera has challenged the norms in the Arab world, they have contested and confronted regimes like no other media organization. They have made some mistakes, indeed, but generally with these uprisings, they have told the story as it was. They have taken the message of the people and broadcasted it throughout the Arabic society.”

5.1.2 Rebel media organization, seen by journalists

The logic in Gitlin’s argument about the power of the media is that in lack of deep knowledge, for instance of what is happening in countries far away, people are pressed to rely on mass media for information about what is going on. People find themselves relying on the media for concepts, for images of their heroes, for guiding information, and so on. (Gitlin, 2003: 1) If a group know about and understand this kind of media phenomenon, in this case the Libyan rebel movement, it can be a good enough reason to facilitate everything needed for journalists to make reporting possible. Bob’s research argues that insurgents are aware of power of international media, and use it, among other strategies, in the marketing of

themselves. Insurgents do nothing more, he says, than their opponents, like governments, multinational corporations or financial institutions, with huge resources and privileged access to international press. But with no big public relation machines to back them up, insurgents must “bootstrap themselves to the fore” (Bob, 2005:23) The rebels in Libya used the resources they could come up with.

At the most dramatic periods of the war, nearly 600 journalists worked from Benghazi at the same time, and the hotels were so filled up that journalists sometimes had to share rooms. The informants experienced an intense organization from the rebel side to help journalists during the course of the conflict. This will be far more comprehensively described in the next subchapters, but it can be fruitful to see it from the eyes of those affected, namely the journalists.

It is important to remember that in Benghazi there were increasing amounts of young people that did not have anything to do during the conflict. “Every workplace and school was shut down, and not everyone dared going into the war. Because of this, many found work in the media sector of the rebel movement, in different media committees, writing reports and press statements”, says Liohn. Wolusmal recounts that in all of Benghazi, even though it was some kind of anarchy, it was a massive and positive spirit of voluntary work. Civil people took care of every basic service the city needed. This spirit also counted in the media sector. Many well-educated Libyans living in exile—either in Canada, Britain, U.S. and other countries—poured in to Benghazi. “These were young people who were willing to make an effort, and they were the main driving force towards the press”, Wolusmal says. Many of the tools journalists need were made available in a burnt out courthouse building. It turned into a media center. Voluntary businessmen were putting up satellite antennas and other equipment for communication, so that the journalist could get internet- and telephone connection. According to the informants this became the “place to be”, not only for journalists, but also for everyone that wanted to speak with the press and had a statement they wanted to express. What several observed was that the journalist that worked for the bigger networks, bigger channels and newspapers with greater resources, used the media center to a lesser degree than the hundreds of journalist working for smaller media outlets or freelance. Yama Wolusmal assesses it this way:

“I saw very much uncritical use of these services, for example that the media center chose interpreters for the journalists, and those interpreters worked for free, and the media center fixed transportation, the

drivers worked for free. That said, what I think was really inappropriate by many journalists was that they let the rebels find “cases” for them. Journalists showed up in the center and said: “I need a family that have lost their son in the fight against Gaddafi”, and then the rebels found a family that fitted, and the journalist were driven out to them. It was so much uncritical use of the media center’s services”.

It is important to distinguish this voluntary work done mostly by young activists, from the NTC-leadership’s media organization and handling. My informants naturally also had to relate to them during the months of conflict. Their organization and effort will be described in a later subchapter, but the journalists’ assessments of their job are crucial for a proper overall impression. In the far beginning of the conflict, Jørgen Lohne comments, he and his colleagues thought of the leadership’s handling of the international media as amateurish. There were little press conferences and a general lack of information about both organization and political goals. Some leader figures randomly showed up in the lobbies of the journalist hotels, and gave some statements. This is also the impression of Birtley: “I felt that the NTC hierarchy handled the media completely wrong” he says, and continues: “They did not want to address certain issues, and they did not feel the need to address issues that came up. Because of this, rumors occurred”. Despite this, the situation improved rapidly as the conflict developed. The rebels got a spokesperson that usually worked as a lawyer, and it became increasingly more possible to find out who the rebels actually were. Press conferences were arranged, and the media center made e-mail lists so the journalists could get information every day about where the press conference was held, and who was going to give statements. This effort surprised the experienced journalists. Wolusmal says:

“I was noticing how fast the rebels and their leadership realized the importance of handling media in a good manner. Remember that Libya was in war, the rebels stood before enormous challenges, it was a grave danger that Gaddafi’s men could storm Benghazi at any point, it was a lack of food, gasoline and other supplies, and in the middle of all this the leadership thought of media handling. That surprised me.”

Wolusmal also noticed that these people were highly knowledgeable and savvy, many of them with high education in Western countries, and they knew the value of treating the media question carefully. “This was especially when the hotel in Benghazi were full of journalists”, he says. The media work was of course not flawless. When asked about the main difference between the Gaddafi regime’s media handling, compared to the rebels’, Jørgen Lohne assesses that the sitting regimes apparatus was more professional, and had better trained media spokesmen.

5.1.3 The rebels' message to the journalists

For an insurgency to succeed, legitimacy and support for the insurgents' struggle can hardly be overestimated. As mentioned, Forest argues that insurgents are often weaker militarily than its powerful nation-state adversary, and their ability to mobilize support and raise awareness for their cause is vital. Simultaneously this is a fundamental vulnerability, if it not works. The need for external support and legitimacy for the Libyan rebels was vital; Gaddafi's forces pushed their rebellion back, and the rebels' use of violence against the government had to be justified. As explained, the rebels got weapon support, bombardment support, and a high degree of support by the western public opinion. According to Bob's theories about how insurgents can form their message to distant audiences in search for support, there are several tactics available. Insurgent groups tend to "simplify and universalize their conflicts, and demonize prominent opponents, embrace vogueish rhetoric" as well as appeal to the sympathy of international actors. (Bob: 30) Bob says insurgents, as a first step, tend to strip their conflict of complexity and ambiguity, projecting a clear picture of an important struggle against a villainous foe. They also appeal to the universal picture of good guy versus bad guy, or underdog versus bully. The journalist informants saw this type of message clearly unfold in the rebel held areas. Many had a great need to tell the journalists how much they hated Gaddafi, and how gravely bad his regime had been, and "how everyone in Libya meant the same". Some journalists see this as an effect of a people that finally could speak freely. They were obsessed with bringing forward the suffering of the Libyan people under the dictator's rule. Jørgen Lohne says:

"The main message was that this was a completely rotten and criminal regime that had to be spat out, and that this was a legitimate fight. (...) Unison from everyone I talked to was that this is a fight that has to be fought to the end, no matter what, even with great amount of casualties. (...) Many in the front line had a relatively fanatic message and said: "To sacrifice the life is an honor, we have no fear, we want battle!"

This is a finding that Bob also have seen in earlier insurgencies. While they play on their repression, Bob says, they emphasize organization coherence and their courage, rather than their helplessness. Photographer Liohn stresses that the Libyan rebels' message was even more simplistic than for insurgencies in many other countries.

"If one goes to Kurdistan to visit PKK, to Afghanistan to visit Taliban, or to Spain to visit ETA or to Colombia to visit FARC, they all have a 'political handbook' that they follow. Taliban stress religion,

FARC have stressed communism, ETA have stressed Basque identity. In Libya it was easier; it was ordinary people that grabbed arms for one reason: “Gaddafi out!” Why “Gaddafi out”? There were many reasons. When a bomb from Gaddafi’s men kills your dad or your sister, the survivors of course want to stress that unfairness. I never felt that they tried to impose journalists with an ideology. It was a diverse group that cooperated with one aim: “Gaddafi out”.

The second clear message after showing the massive hate against Gaddafi was to get the international community to act against him. The journalists’ impression is that the need for external support seemed crucial. Their message to journalists was that without aerial support to halt the regimes dominance in the air, the rebellion would be crushed and Benghazi would fall. Some said they wanted aerial support, but not “foreign boots on the ground”. The message of urgent need was even well organized in Benghazi during the first phase of the conflict. It became a tradition that every evening after prayer, people poured to protest in front of the media center for the air campaign case. They followed the international debate closely, and registered who was in favor of supporting them, and who was not. They quickly condemned Russia and China and embraced Great Britain, U.S. and France for the effort they lay down in diplomatic, political and military questions. The rebels were very eager to stress who was a friend of the “free Libya”, and who were not. Farrell said that many rebels he spoke to was very media aware, and physically showed him casualties in hospitals, as an argument for demanding the west to begin air strikes “to cripple Gaddafi’s overwhelming air, sea and land military superiority”. Birtley confirms this: “They said they could not survive without external support. It was vital”, he says. Birtley was in Benghazi on the night the UN resolution was signed, and recounts that it was “like they had won the World Cup”. He was kissed and hugged all the time, and people held placates in front of the TV cameras saying “Thank you, Al-Jazeera” and “Thank you, Sarkozy”.

It was also important for the rebels to stress that they actually were “the good guys”. They wanted to express that they were morally superior to the sitting regime, and to counter what Gaddafi’s media staff said about them being al-Qaida related bandits. Wolusmal assesses:

“They expressed intensively that they were civilians that usually worked as dentists and engineers. This seemed important for them, also because they depended on giving a good impression about themselves; that they were a better alternative, more civilized and that they had democratic values. They hoped to persuade the international community to acknowledge the interim government.”

Even though these people may just say what actually is true, these forms of messages could be compared to the term white propaganda. It is usually close to accurate or even true, but is “presented in a manner that attempts to convince the audience that the sender is the good guy with the best ideas and political ideology”. (Jowett and O’Donnell, 1999: 6) White propaganda attempts to build credibility with the audience, in this case the western media consumers, and this credibility can become useful at some point in the future. Jørgen Lohne believes that someone in the leadership obviously talked together to make the narrative about their struggle as positive as possible, and point out that it is quite obvious that the rebels saw the presence of foreign journalist as an opportunity to present themselves in a proper way. “Everyone in a conflict situation will try to use journalists to paint a positive image, also rebels”, he says, and continues: “The clear cut stand they took against such a rotten regime helped to give the rebels a positive angle on their fight, seen from the western audiences view”. This strive for legitimacy will be discussed in the NTC-chapter.

5.1.4 Hostility towards the media, and propaganda

It is useful to recount Jowett and O’Donnell’s much cited definition: “Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.” One can say that the rebels’ desired intent was to be seen as the “good guys” and their fight to be seen as legitimate. They hoped the journalists would bring forward this view. I have earlier mentioned the white type of propaganda, but the black type is known as “the big lie”. According to Jowett and O’Donnell it is credited to a false source and spread lies, fabrications and deceptions. Several of the journalist informants claim the rebels tried to manipulate information, and worked to deny journalists access to information.

As the conflict went along the rebels were not always eager to have journalists along. This is something several of the informants point out. Before he was captured by Gaddafi troops, Stephen Farrell of the New York Times was covering the retreat of the rebels back towards east, as Gaddafi troops were advancing. He says that the rebels he followed were extremely “ill-trained and ignorant”. They wanted him there while they were advancing, but when they were retreating, they got very nervous and often they were threatened at gunpoint to put their cameras down. “They did not understand technology, and seemed to believe that even the smallest stills or video camera could transmit live images to satellites, thereby giving away

their position”, he says. They did not want their strategies to be reviled by journalists. This is something Tony Birtley understands. Certain networks were actually putting up their cameras in the front line while reporting live, and within minutes Gaddafi’s army began shelling and killing. “In a war zone you have a lot of inexperienced journalist running around, and some of them do not understand that their presence can be damaging”, Birtley says, and adds:

“Every single military in the world want some control over the media. The British, the Americans, the Europeans, NATO and others, they only give you what they want, whether it is facilities or cooperation at certain times. Being a person that have covered many wars, and seen this up close and personal, I understand that the rebels felt the need to have some control in the situation.”

During the course of the conflict the informants experienced a change of behavior within the rebel movement. As their power grew, they became more hostile towards journalists. Especially after the rebels had entered Tripoli, brought down Gaddafi’s political power, and sought to terminate the last pockets of resistance, the rebels were more difficult to work with. In the last fight for Sirte, many rebels that the journalists had met earlier in the conflict behaved more aggressively, edgy and critical towards the journalists. Wolusmal was even held at gunpoint at several occasions and was threatened to move away. They said they would shoot if he did not stop the interviewing of civilians from Gaddafi’s hometown. The rebels had shelled the city for weeks, and it was clearly important for them to have some control over the information about what was going on. André Liohn, who also was threatened by rebels, sees it like this:

“Everyone in a conflict, no matter what, want the press to be there if they are victims of an oppressor. But when the rebels entered Sirte they were not the victims anymore. They had ruined the hospital totally with shelling, and it was difficult to work as a photographer. I believe it is like this: If you are a victim you want to speak out loud, but when you become powerful, and it doesn’t have to be much power, the press is not important anymore. The press is used when useful. Therefore it is important that the press doesn’t become an instrument for any parts in the conflict”

Wolusmal agrees with Liohn’s argument:

“I saw a clear change in behavior from the time when the rebels was not recognized, did not have political support, nor had the international community on their side. When they advanced on the battlefield, the attitude changed. The reason for this, we found out later, was that the rebel also stood behind many violations of human rights, like torture and mistreatment of those they saw as the enemy’s supporters.”

The CCTV and TV2 journalist Wolusmal experienced a complicated situation when reporting on the fight over Sirte. This story can explain how important the rebels saw the power of media coverage. He and other journalist stayed in an old school building that was transformed into a makeshift hospital. They slept and ate there, got supplies and electricity. Every day dead bodies came in, and Wolusmal always checked out the corpses, to see what kind of wounds they had suffered. Also dead Gaddafi loyalist came in, and when he looked through the body bags he saw that many of them were handcuffed and had bullet wounds in the back of their head. It looked like outright executions. Wolusmal said that his cameraman should film the reportedly evidence of war crimes. Doctors that previously had been helpful and kind ran up to the reporters, yelling, and told them to pack their equipment and leave. When they denied, the doctors became aggressive. The reporters depended on the facilities the school building gave them, and they faced a dilemma: Should they send the pictures of the executions and report on it, or should they not, and continue to stay on the school and still be friends with the rebel commanders? “Of course we took the difficult choice to send the footage, and move out”, Wolusmal says.

Furthermore, efforts to deliver false information—clear-cut propaganda—were evident. Farrell experienced that rebel commanders made “wild unsubstantiated claims” and expected the journalists to report on it at once without checking the information properly. On one occasion they claimed to have captured a number of Gaddafi fighters and said they were held in custody. Even senior PR officials got quite irritated when Farrell refused to report this without seeing the prisoners. In the interview with Farrell, he said it would be useful to refer to an account written by his New York Times colleague Chrispoher J. Chivers. In the report he reviles an anti-Gaddafi doctor’s lie about a dead man being a well-paid mercenary. Chivers writes: “To cover war is often to wander a thicket of lies. And opportunists are ever trying to confuse you further. War is like any other form of politics: Many people out there do not speak to journalists, they try to speak through journalists” (Chivers: 2011). He points out that the anti-Gaddafi forces’ spokesmen in the NTC often did not particularly care about the truth during the conflict. He further claims:

“For much of this year, a public win for the anti-Qaddafi forces was in one-upping the regime propaganda with propaganda of their own, each false assertion standing to be reproduced in a he-said-she-said wrap-up that fed the daily cycles of news. Again and again the anti-Qaddafi forces made claims that later proved not just wrong, but baldly untrue. Think, for one line of these falsehoods, how many times opposition officials in Benghazi, their capital, said that the oil city of Brega had fallen, and that

rebels had it under their control, when in fact the Qaddafi soldiers there remained entrenched, and the rebels— disorganized, poorly led and often prone to pell-mell retreats — were still feeling their way clumsily down the road.” (Ibid)

My informants confirm the impression Chivers have of the rebels’ lies. Birtley says he saw certain parts of the opposition’s infrastructure trying to mislead the media, especially in the early days of conflict there were “incredible rumors”, with no kind of proof, and many people were taking this information as truth. One such claim was rape as a systematic weapon of war by Gaddafi loyalists. This was even picked up by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, among others. “We could not find any proof of such raping. Amnesty International did a broad investigation in the cities where the raping should have taken place, they interview many women, and found no evidence”, Birtley says, and adds: “Some people did try to exploit the media. If you repeat some things often enough it almost become facts.” Chivers writes in his report about rebel propaganda, that in the short term, circulating falsehoods and exaggerating or concocting evidence might feel like a smart shortcut for those seeking support for their cause, but:

“...in the long term, wartime statements that evaporate under scrutiny are corrosive, and can harm those who craft them. In Libya, they undermined the credibility of the transitional council and many of its supporters, like this doctor, who instead of reaping some benefit or marshaling sympathy for the anti-Qaddafi cause demonstrated that even doctors could not always be relied upon, and that the dead were mere tools.

5.1.5 Why the war was popular among journalists

The Libyan civil war was a massively reported war, both in the Arabic countries but also all over the world. During the five trips Wolusmal made to Libya during the conflict, he did more live performances on TV than he had made during his five former years as an international reporter. Several believe some of the reason for this extraordinary interest is Gaddafi himself. He was a famous dictator in the West, and was a special case politically, diplomatically and historically. Ben Ali of Tunisia and Mubarak in Egypt could not match his reputation. Also he chose to fight until the end, which increased the drama and interest. Another vital fact was that the Arab “world” as we knew it showed signs of collapsing, a news story that in itself was comprehensive. The opposition also gained control over eastern Libya very fast, and for journalists, the access to a story is a crucial key. “We had a human-interest story. Civilians was getting shelled and killed by their leaders, it is as massive story, and it would have been,

whether it was in Thailand, Burma, South America, anywhere”, Birtley says. He believes the Libyan conflict was special because it was a very early presence of the international community. “Usually, the further you go from Europe, the less interest there is for the story, unless your own people are very much involved”. In this case the West was heavily involved. Birtley also believe the rebels media campaign was helped forward by this crucial line of events:

“If you get bloodshed, you get headlines. If you get headlines, you get notice. If you get notice governments must answer questions about how to relate to the situation. In this way the event builds it own momentum, and except from the Gulf war, the momentum in Libya grew faster than any other conflict I have covered.”

This is the logic of the CNN-effect, and it will be thoroughly discussed in the chapters ahead.

5.2 Young helpers and activists

This subchapter presents the work and beliefs of youth in Benghazi, and young Libyans living abroad, that actively and voluntarily helped journalists to report on the rebels’ revolutionary cause during the conflict. I have mapped the extent of their work, their organizing, their motivation and reasoning for doing what they did. I will firstly explain how the most comprehensive group, the activists in the Media Centre in Benghazi, carried out their work, before I do the same with one of the biggest groups of diasporas, the Libyan Youth Movement. Secondly, I will show these people’s motivation, and to what degree they believe their work was important for the revolutionary cause. Together, a presentation of these loosely connected groups of hundreds of people will help paint the picture of an intense effort to help and push international media during the conflict.

5.2.1 Media Center – Organization and work

As mentioned, a turning point in the early revolt came on the 20th of February when protesters managed to attack and siege the central military compound within Benghazi, the same time as the interior minister, and former Army officer, Abdel Fattah Younis defected with his security force. The defection turned the momentum around in eastern part of Libya, and was also a major propaganda victory for the rebels. The problem was that there were no international media in the city at the time. The first journalist to enter the liberated parts of Libya was

CNN's Ben Wedeman, and he arrived in Benghazi on the 23rd of February. He was met by thousands of people shouting "CNN, CNN". From then on, journalists poured into the city from the border of Egypt. An organized group was soon made to handle the amount of journalists wanting to report.

Towards the end of February the head of a major English-speaking school in Benghazi noticed that the translators that randomly were helping journalists was not qualified enough. Their English was reportedly not good, and they translated wrong and misunderstood important aspects. As Isha Aftaita, one of the organizers, says, "It was not good for the image the rebels needed". Because of this, the school manager started to call up all the teachers he had and said he needed oral examiners to come in. Around 300 people showed up to take the speaking tests, and to volunteer for translation. The score was up to 40, and they had to get better than 30 to pass the test. English teachers also signed up for the translating work. After this testing, the fresh team of media organizers had made a full list, a book of qualified translators in different languages. Both Japanese-, English-, French-, Italian-, Spanish-, Swedish-, and Russian-speaking Libyans stood ready to help journalists from different countries that had just arrived in Benghazi. During the testing the qualified translators were given a booklet of ten pages, of all the things they needed to know about the revolution, the way the organization saw it. They were told not to use the words "civil war" or "rebel", because the words were seen as negative. "They had to have an understanding of what was going on, but still we wanted them to be neutral, not bias, in their translating", says Aftaita. The translators also worked as drivers and guides to almost everything in Benghazi and the area around. A much used term for this is "fixer". According to the informants, many journalists were highly dependent on the group's staff in the beginning of the conflict. "Some of them could not move without us. A reason for that could be that it was difficult to know who to trust in the city at that time, and we had the whole trust thing going", says Aftaita.

At this point, in late February, the organization was working out of a totally burnt out courthouse in downtown Benghazi, with two chairs and a table, a scanner and a printer. Many called it "the oven" because it was burnt, but it was effectively cleaned and painted. Soon the complexity and volume of the office grew. They got a full photocopy machine, computers, wireless internet, electricity from a generator, computers, satellite phones, and electronic and printed databases of both fixers and journalists. People from the communication companies in Libya, experts in their fields, came together to work out a proper system. An engineer brought

up the internet system, which got the media center connected to the web. This was seen as vital for the group to work in the best possible way. Hundreds of people worked with different tasks at the media center; only the translators and drivers were near 500 in numbers. In the beginning the journalists got free SIM-cards, free transportation, free food, and free hotels. “They were spoiled”, says Aftaita. When journalists came to Benghazi they would have to show their passport and Press ID or some kind of proof that they were journalists. The center scanned their passports and got the journalists to fill out a complete application form with basic information, like where they were staying, address back home, full name, and so on. This information was filed, and the journalists got a stamped press card with a picture on it. From February to September the center registered about 3000 journalists.

Many journalists wanted to travel to the front line to report on the rebels’ deadly fighting against Gaddafi’s troops. The Media Centre also arranged this to happen smoothly. They had direct contact with the Military Council and the NTC itself, and they received messages about where the front line would stop. Mostly, journalists were allowed to go 30 kilometers before that. Usually the rebels would not let them further, because they had some experiences with journalists that went missing. If that happened the center would have all the contact information to the journalists and to his or her local fixer, and they would try to find out where they were, and contact their embassies. Before going to the frontline the journalists received a letter that approved that “he or she was with us”, with all the information about the journalist, so rebel guards could let them through the barricades. The center also called commanders before the trip, to ask for allowance for journalists to go. But not everyone was welcome. Aftaita explains how the rebel media organization had control.

“We had some agencies that we did not want in the front line. This was agencies from China and Russia, and we were skeptical because of the whole no-fly zone debate. We could not know whose side they were on, and we did not want anything coming against us. Sometimes they could take a story and go backwards with it.”

As well as front line approval, the Media Centre also organized access to hospitals, training camps and prisons. Trips to the more complicated city Misrata were also arranged here.

The majority of journalists had, as told, local fixers that could help them navigate in the best way in the conflict area. Two of them were Zway and Alfitory, and they help explain how it worked. The two ended up as fixers almost by accident. Friends and family had met reporters that needed help, and called them up. From translating it escalated to driving and guiding all

day long. As Zway puts it, “the journalists needed somebody to give them a lay of the land. I explained who were who, background, and history of Libya and Libyans. But I was not completely neutral of course”. Alfitory says that the reporters did not know much about Libya, and that he had to explain the reporters a lot. The first period they spoke to families and brigades around Benghazi, before they travelled to the frontline. Here the local fixers risked their lives to help the journalists. They went to Ajdabiya, Brega and Misrata, and got shot at by mortars and snipers. As Zway fled a shelling, he tried to get as many journalists as possible into his car, before they escaped.

The most intense period in the center was March, April and May. As the summer came, with its stalemate and little progress, fewer journalists came to Benghazi. In the first months the Media Centre was a voluntarily project that was not under any other revolutionary umbrella. As the informants explain the center did not get NTC’s recognition at first, and they “did not show any particular interest to what the hundreds of youths did”. In May, NTC’s media committee approached the Media Centre and said they needed them to keep their work going. So from then on the center was organized directly under NTC. The ID-Cards changed to have an official NTC mark. “We needed to get things official, and they needed to keep things organized, so we cooperated”, says Lina Selbesh, one of the organizers.

An important aspect is that almost everyone that worked to help the media did so voluntarily and therefore did not charge anything for their long time effort. This fact even became an issue for many journalist, because they wanted to pay to keep things right. Some journalists were unhappy about this situation. As an example the fixers Alfitory and Zway worked for free from February until December, all the time, with many different news organizations. Even though the big international news organizations wanted to pay, the two refused to receive money, and said: “If we can’t work for free for you, you must find someone else to work with”. Zway explain the strong principal issue like this:

“It was important to do it for free, because we were helping a cause. If there was no media to help, I was going to fight. The fighters did not take any money for their job, so why should we? And culturally you do not take money from outsiders; you rather try to help them. In this case the outsiders even helped us. It was not right to take money. Not acceptable.”

Aftaita in the media center also worked every day for seven months for free, until she went back to her job as a teacher, and she emphasize that she would have “given up years for this cause”. Her colleague Selbesh also stresses the cultural aspect. “Libyan custom does not

allow payment for helping foreigners, and we were volunteers, it was not a business for us”, she says.

5.2.2 Diaspora activists: Organization

The media organizations in Benghazi got help from abroad to spread the word of the uprising. Already on February 2nd, 2011, two weeks before the revolution started, an organization called Libyan Youth Movement (LYM) was formed. It was a group of well-educated Libyan friends living all over the world, who cooperated to be an informative online news service for anybody interested. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter should be used as a tool. The founders had seen what had happened in Tunisia and Egypt and believed it was going to happen in Libya at any moment. Rumors said that 17th was going to be the date. Up until that day the organization did not get much attention, because few thought such an uprising could happen in Libya. As the revolution started the amount of interest increased radically, and they got thousands of followers online, almost over night. The two founders were splitting the 24 hours a day in half, so that the one worked daytime in England, and the other worked daytime in Canada. The little gap of time where both were sleeping got covered by a Libyan youth living in Dubai. All the members had family and friends living in Libya, and before international journalists entered the country on February 22nd, it was a lack of news from within Benghazi. The organization tried to provide the world’s media organizations with information and news. They got news out in this way: The members had friends on the ground that had cell phones that went on and off. The signals were highly unstable, and only a couple of people in the whole city had satellite phones and working internet. LYM tried to call them all day long, to get through. They also smuggled satellite phones into the country from the Egypt border. People that took pictures and video sent it to them when the connection was working. Then LYM translated all the material from Arabic and sent it to news agencies. Libya was not in the headlines in the beginning, and the members of the organization believed that Gaddafi was going to use violence against the protesters in Benghazi. Founder Omar Amer says:

“We needed to get news out in English. It was our duty. We translated and spoke to media organization in the western world. We had no choice but to be a news agency, because in the beginning no one was covering the story. The first pictures from Benghazi showed that people were celebrating the freedom of the city, and that tells you what had been going on before that freedom. We do not know how many died. We did a job that nobody else could.”

The international news organizations did not fully trust LYM in the beginning, and the founders were trying to convince the journalists to believe that the video and picture material actually was from Benghazi. In the beginning they provided a lot of information from a man named Mohammed Nabous, one of the most famous news providers based in Benghazi at the time. LYM contacted al-Jazeera, which did not dare to run the interview, because Nabous' whereabouts could not be confirmed. CNN ran the interview soon after, and it is said to be one of the most circulated interviews from the time. Nabous was shot dead by a sniper shortly after, while trying to film Gaddafi's attack on Benghazi. It was reportedly a frustrating time for the young activists. Amer tried to get the news out:

“When I heard from my people inside Benghazi that the city had been liberated, which was crazy news, I phoned BBC and they did not believe me first. Then I did an interview on air with BBC World Service, and I was quick to say that ‘Benghazi had been liberated today’, and the host of the program quickly said that ‘BBC cannot confirm this, but if that is true you heard it here first’.”

When picture evidence became more comprehensive, and the internet connections became stronger, pictures and videos started to flood from Benghazi. LYM gave all the material they obtained to the journalists, who used some of it for their articles and reportages. When al-Jazeera first quoted them, they got a serious jump in their attention. Amer was on air for BBC at least 15 times during the spring. News agencies from all over the world contacted them. But Amer says that they had one problem in the beginning of the revolution: They were “very emotional, and pushed out every bit of information they got, without confirming the trustworthiness of it”. Some of it was even false news, and he understands that some news organizations were skeptical. “We were not journalists, but activists, and we were worried about our friends and family inside Libya”, he says. After a while they developed into only posting credible information. In that way they became more trusted by the media. The organization had a full database of people inside Libya, and they provided names and number to journalists. As Amer puts it, they “became an engine behind much of the reporting on Libya”. Soon the 21 members of LYM became one of the leading voices of Libya outside the country. On Twitter 52.000 people followed their updates, and 23.000 on Facebook. The organization tried to be a voice of Libyan youth, give the world a Libyan perspective on the conflict, feed journalists with information, and counter Gaddafi's propaganda. They also provided front line news, and helped journalists inside Libya with information.

It is clear that raising international awareness was seen as crucial for these people, and this is what Bob says is an important key for many insurgencies. International media is vital to spread the word about the insurgencies' activities, he says. According to him, as mentioned before, creating a political spectacle is one strategy, including mass demonstration and violence. Violent events often attract media more effectively than peaceful events. These attention-grabbing factors were highly present in Benghazi in the beginning of the uprising. Bob further claims that whether violent or nonviolent, the key is to grab media attention and “dramatically encapsulate the rebels’ identity grievances, and demands.” The young activists in Benghazi used this opportunity. They organized and worked intensively to bring forward the message of the revolution.

5.2.3 Motivation and the belief in the power of media

The young Libyan helpers and activists had a clear stated reason to work organized and comprehensive towards international media during the conflict in Libya. The following will present their views on the work they lay down, and the importance for a revolutionary movement to try to facilitate for, and influence, the media. Central here and later in the chapter about the members of NTC, is the so-called CNN-effect. As pointed out in the theoretical chapter, the phenomenon was much debated, after heavily communicated news events such as the fall of the Berlin wall and the Gulf war. After these events it has been discussed to what extent this media persuasiveness had influenced governments and the foreign policy making. The new technologies appeared to reduce the scope for calm deliberation over policy, forcing policy-makers to respond to whatever issue journalists focused on. The phrase ‘CNN effect’ encapsulated the idea that real-time communications technology could provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to global events. One of the aspects of the CNN-effect discusses media as an agenda-setter. The argument says that emotional and compelling coverage of atrocities or humanitarian crises can reorder foreign policy priorities. Agents arguing for the “agenda-setting theory” argue that the choices and selections of national interests are too heavily weighted in favor of what happens to get covered by CNN or other media. The argument is that media, for a variety of commercial and professional reasons, is drawn to the dramatic visuals found in most humanitarian emergencies. As we will see, this is highly applicable in relation to what was going on in Libya.

Firstly: The reason why many young people in Benghazi ended up working with international media was an intense desire to volunteer for the revolutionary cause. Selbesh's example is explanatory. She is an educated architect, and in the beginning of the revolution the doctors and nurses had something palpable to do, while there was little an architect could contribute with. They needed translators for the international media, and because of her good English the work was suitable. "Everyone was at the frontline and we were just sitting here. There were already enough women that made food for the fighters. We wanted to contribute", she says. It was the need to do anything for the revolution that also drew her colleague Afthaita to the Media Centre. "I had an uncle that died during the Abu Selim prison massacre in 1996, and I have an uncle that is still missing. I was 'close to home' while working voluntarily for the revolution" she says. The fixer Zway explains how he came to understand how important it was to get the word out about what was going on.

"When the rebellion started there was no one in Benghazi to report on it. At this point, before the war had really started, I believe journalism was even more important than weapons. We needed international support, and who else could get that message through than reporters? Gaddafi had his own propaganda, so we had to battle it. We had a whole region liberated, and we needed to get the word out.

His colleague Alfitory had the same argument in an interview with British journalists as he got an award for his work:

"In the beginning I had decided to fight with the rebels, as it was our duty to protect our city. But just for a moment, until I realized that to help the journalists would be a much better cause. Back in February there were a lot of people starting to fight but not many helping journalists." (Gunter 2011)

To me he says "the revolution started with protest the 15th, and until the 20th we needed soldiers, officers, and the most important thing we needed was reporters to show what we had done. Half of the country was liberated".

All the informants stress the fact that there had been attempts on rebellion in Benghazi before, especially in 2006, but that the protests were brought down by Gaddafi's regime even before the word had reached other cities. It did not reach out to a foreign public. Amer in the Libyan Youth Movement had a strategy to get the news of this uprising out. One of the first days of protests, BBC Arabic called him for news. He sent them a video of a demonstration at the Egyptian border, and then a video of a demonstration on the Tunisian border. He said to them: "Please, put both of these videos on air, because people in Libya can still watch BBC Arabic, and if they could see people protesting on either side of the country, they would understand

that this is not an isolated happening. The whole country is in revolt”. They aired the video footage and played it again and again. The youths say international media gave the Libyan people a voice they never had had before. Many of them add that the media also worked as a safeguard for the people in Benghazi. Selbesh says:

“For the past 42 years it has been attempts on revolution, to do something against the regime, but we have been disconnected to the world, and we could not get our story across. For this revolution the media was a key. (...) If no one heard about what was going on in Libya, Gaddafi could have just killed us all. But now the world was able to hear our voice and see what Gaddafi was doing to us”

Because of this experience Selbesh and her friends have started an organization called Independent Libyan Media that fight for free media. They believe awareness and communication with the world is essential, and that free media can work as a safeguard for new dictators taking power and abusing its people.

While the awareness of the importance of news made these young people go into the media related work, rather than fighting, the belief in the power of media increased as the revolution proceeded. They saw that the daily reporting from Tunisia and Egypt, showing masses of people demonstrating, made Libyans understand that it was possible to do revolt. Many of them actually believe that without the presence of international media in Libya, the revolution would hardly have succeeded. Amer says: “Libya was at war, but it was a psychological war, as much as a physical one. The media was a major weapon in this war. In the end I believe we won all possible wars”. Aftaita believes it would have succeeded in the end, but that it could have ended up like the humanitarian catastrophe we saw in Syria during the spring of 2012. She thinks that the media work was not vital alone, but a part of a successful mix. “It was connected all together, not just us. If one chain were missing it would not be as strong as it was. Many did more important work, but we did what we could”, she says. The CNN-effect comes in here. Amer in LYM does of course not mention the term “CNN-effect” but his argument follows the same logic. The argument strongly shows in what way the youth, through systematic media influence, could save the Libyan revolution:

“A few days before the UN resolution was signed, the BBC called me and asked me for some news, and they said, ‘you guys in the Libyan Youth Movement get the news out 24 hours before the news hours’. I was thrilled, because we were unpaid students. We provided awareness for all kinds of news organizations, and it was the news organization that drummed up all the support for the UN resolution, because they showed what Gaddafi was doing. I believe that had we not been able to do that, the news organizations would not have put that particular attention to Libya, because at that point Bahrain was

going through their revolution, Egypt was in a mess, Syria was starting, and Yemen was getting a lot of attention. (...) We drummed up the news organizations, and they got news out, and the ministers in the western countries became involved, and it became *the* story at the time. We got headlines.”

Amer’s argument is an important indicator of the underlying motivation many of these young people had when they started to work intensely toward journalists. They believed in a direct connection between media attention and political action, they believe their and the journalists work influenced the UN resolution in their favor. As we will see later on, this argument will be further emphasized in the chapter about NTC members and their media work.

5.2.4 The activists’ message

According to Kiras, insurgents often seek to legitimize their use of violence and translate this into meaningful support for their cause, by demonstrating moral superiority over those who represent the state. In this case the representative of the state was Gaddafi. Moral superiority for the insurgents is a cornerstone of all irregular fighting theory, Kiras says. To show that the insurgency in Libya was a fight by the people, by civilians, against a brutal dictator, seemed crucial to express. It was all about legitimacy. They wanted to get their struggle to be understood by the political leadership in the international community, but also by the general public of the world. There was an ongoing debate about who the rebels actually were, and what their motives were. Gaddafi’s propaganda apparatus tried to tell the world that the rebels were al-Qaida-connected criminals. The youth wanted to counter these claims. A quote by Aftaita sums up much of what my informants wanted to express to reporters in the beginning of the uprising: “Firstly, many thought we were like thugs and terrorists, but we were normal people (...) We just want to live our lives, we are up to date on fashion and technology, we are open minded and have a modern mix of religion and culture”. Selbesh also found it frustrating that some journalists were expecting only to find rebels with guns. She wanted to express that this was a peoples’ revolution, and that “all Libyans” were working for this uprising. “We only wanted freedom, and that this man did not kill us”, she says. As a fixer, Zway wanted to guide the journalists he helped to answer the questions everyone was trying to answer: Who are the rebels? “I tried to show that it really was a revolution, and that everybody was a rebel, so it was difficult to define the group. I think this guiding helped”, he says. For this group of young Libyans it was important to get their own moderate and modern opinions heard and publicized, so that people around the world could understand their desire for freedom from the regime. To express and show a similarity between them and people in

the western world was a simple and effective way of reaching out of support. And as we know, it worked: For example, 70 percent of the Norwegian public backed the military efforts against Gaddafi's regime. The young revolutionaries gained sympathy.

5.3 National Transitional Council

The development of an overarching governing council for the Libyan revolutionaries occurred towards the end of February 2011. Former regime officials and recently returned expatriates formed a movement of political leadership, and after meetings in Benghazi and several other cities, the National Transitional Council's announcement of the new political formation was made in early March. Support and legitimacy from the world community was essential for the new organization. This chapter seeks to discuss and explain three different aspects: Firstly, in what way the new organization was working to handle the international journalists coming to report on the insurgency—how the media group organized themselves during the eight month long fight. Again a descriptive analysis is needed. Secondly, I will look into the NTC members view on the importance of external support for their revolution. It is important to emphasize these views, to understand why they saw journalist as a crucial tool: Through journalists they could get international help. I will here also look into what message the NTC members wanted to convey through to international journalist. Thirdly, I will discuss how the Council used propaganda as a tool, and how they reacted to atrocities on the rebel side.

5.3.1 An emerging organization

In the beginning of the revolution there was no organization. Benghazi was in rebel hands, and the scene was chaotic. No international journalists had arrived. On February 17th Hana Galal went to the burnt out courthouse, and people started to give her mobile phones so she could talk to journalists. Because of the uncertainty of the situation, she did not give the reporters her name. After the first few days they saw that the rebellion grew, and the activists at the courthouse understood that they needed to get organized. Galal founded something called the "Media and Humanitarian committee". At the time there were a number of different committees with different objectives. They worked as a coalition of volunteers. The groups were translating, talking with journalists via phones, collected documentation, and tried to get people on the roof of the courthouse to get internet connection. The regime tried to cut and shut down both internet and phone connections, so an alternative method was to bring the

documenting material by car to the border of Egypt, and get people to publish it from there. After the first week Galal was taking part in the formation of the NTC. At first, the leadership of NTC did not have a plan concerning media handling, and in the beginning they reportedly did not give much attention to the importance of media. Mohammed Elkish and a group of his friends gave the leadership of NTC a presentation of a potential media structure for the organization.

“We told them that communication is important in such a war. The main goal should be to transfer a transparent picture about what was happening on the ground, letting the world know what is going on in Libya. (...) We said that the leaders needed to bring forward a clear message that could be reported, to show what they are after, and show the suffering of the people. Gaddafi had his own media, and they were very good at propaganda, so we thought: Let’s give him a battle’. In the end the leadership of the NTC was convinced.”

From then on the Media and Communication Committee was formed. They had an international media unit, a military media unit, a social media unit, a local media unit, and a print and digital section. Each unit had its hierarchy and its own team. They also had a group they called “Media Influence Team”. I will come back to that under the propaganda section. In all 35-40 persons worked in the committee. Much of the committee’s job was to help the rebel leadership with media handling. They corrected the mistakes they did, and came up with advice. Sometimes they abstained from translating aspects in documents they knew would be bad marketing for the rebellion. They arranged press conferences and put people in the front that they knew would express the revolutionaries point in a best manner. “We were cleaning up the mess. We were strong revolutionaries committed for the revolution to succeed”, says Mrs. Galal. The committee had a morning meeting every day, where the heads of the different units attended. They discussed events from the day before, and what would happen the present they, if they knew. They strategized and planned. The different units had different tasks:

- The Social media unit was the biggest, with about 20 people. They used Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to push news and messages about the rebellion. They also monitored the international media, and made a report for the committee members every day. Primarily, they reported on how Gaddafi’s propaganda had been used by international media, but also what aspects should be focused on, and pushed further to journalists. Also, if mistakes were made in the media, the committee would call the

actual media organization and say that, for example, the number of casualties they reported was wrong.

- The Military media unit worked to give reporters information about how the military conflict proceeded. The frontline moved often, and the unreliable information about the fight was something the journalists were unhappy about. The unit worked from the military operational center in Benghazi, and they had direct contact with the commanders in the front line. The Head of the unit, Busin, says it was difficult to get all information right. Sometimes he physically drove out to the scene of a given event, talked to rebel soldiers and witnesses, and passed the information to journalists. He also claims that the unit had spies inside Tripoli that fed them with information that was passed on to journalists.
- The International media unit was primarily dealing with, and briefing, international journalists during the conflict. It was this unit that embraced the so-called Media Centre described in the previous subchapter. The youth was placed under this unit as it became apart of the NTC hierarchy. Dealing with registration, press passes, and authorization to go different places was a part of their job. One of the main tasks was the press conferences. They were usually arranged in the hotels where the journalists lived. The head of the unit, Mohammed Elkish, says he treated the conferences like a marketing event. He was mainly doing sales and marketing events before he became a part of the revolutionary movement. “I considered NTC as a customer and they wanted a perfect press conference. I made sure I had the new Libyan flag, and that all journalists were invited. It was a marketing event”, he says. In front of the press conferences the people higher up in the hierarchy, like the vice-president and president of the NTC, was briefed and informed by the staff, before they went out to the journalists.
- The head spokesman role was to take part in the committee’s work, continually try to have an overview of the situation, do interviews, arrange interviews with the frontline staff, counter ‘false’ news, and participate in the international news organizations’ live shows as a representative of NTC. At the same time Jalal Galal also saw it as his task to lift morale and eliminate fear in the population of Libya. “We did not have time to evaluate if we were as effective as we could be. We had to proceed, proceed and proceed”, he says.

The committee members worked from morning to night, and they say international journalists called 24 hours a day. After Tripoli fell in August, the committee moved together with the rest of NTC to the capital, where they continued working in the same way.

5.3.2 Views on legitimacy and support in relation to media

Insurgents are able to achieve success by gaining an advantage in terms of four main essential dimensions: time, space, legitimacy and support. The two latter is of particular interest to this thesis. Kiras claims few insurgencies survive without some form of support. Support however, is interlinked with, and inseparable from, the legitimacy of the organization, because violence conducted without a comprehensible political purpose will generate little popular support. The revolutionaries in Libya knew this. The young activists' emphasis on the importance of external help, and therefore journalistic reporting as a tool, coincides with the views of my informants in the NTC. They see a direct link between influencing the media and getting legitimacy and external support. To get the argument right, I will firstly show the revolutionaries desire for legitimacy and external support, before I show how they worked to achieve these two important dimensions.

Jalal Galal's argument serves as an example. His greatest goal as a spokesman was to get support from the international community.

“We needed help, and we needed help desperately, now, and promptly, because many men were falling every hour. We were very aware that Gaddafi would go to any length to destroy this uprising. (...) If journalists could not convince the international community to pass a resolution that was strong enough, and to act decisively, our revolution would have been stifled. Luckily journalists did their job, luckily, on the 17th of March a very tough resolution was passed. From passing the resolution to actually carry out military actions was not more than 36 hours. It was historic and necessary, because if it was not for the resolution we would probably not look at Benghazi as we do now. From then on, Benghazi had a protectorate in the international community.”

This argument is supported from the other informants. Abdul Busin believes that the international community saw what Gaddafi did against his own people, and that they would have been killed if they had not gotten any help. “If he had managed to take back the country, I can assure you that I would not have been sitting here today, as well as thousands of others”, he says. Busin was one of NATO's first contacts in Libya, already in February, and is thus a first hand source on what kinds of external support the rebels wanted. He said they did not

want foreign soldiers on the ground, because they have seen what complications that has caused in Afghanistan and Iraq. “We did not need soldiers. We had the men to carry out operations, not with much experience, but with much courage. We rather needed weapons in our hands” he says and continues: “I told NATO to send us weapons, so we had the means to defend ourselves. Unfortunately complications in international law made this difficult. But the air campaign certainly helped”. As earlier described, both Qatar and several other countries gave the rebel movement weapons after a while. Dr. Hana Galal was one of the people in NTC that worked most focused with getting a UN resolution through. “For 42 years Gaddafi had spent our money on weapons. He had declared war against his own people. We had all rights to ask for external help. We had been treated with violence and atrocities”, she says.

So how did these people try to drum up the attention they needed to get the support and legitimacy they wanted? Journalists were seen as one of the best tools. Spokesman Galal says their options were limited, and that they had few alternative things to do. They saw that with the international journalists the world could live with the people of Libya day by day. “We did not think of all the journalists as a power we could use, but rather a salvation”, he says. To get the message through, Mr. Galal, as a spokesman, tried to portray the “dangers, the brutality, the fear, and the expectations the people had”. “The smartest thing to do in such a situation, I think, is to let your emotions show through, and I did. I think we succeeded”, he says. Hana Galal used the same strategy. She wanted the average person in the international community to feel the Libyan people’s fear. In an interview with the BBC she tried to explain her situation, and used the fact that she was a mother of two as an emotional tool. She says “it was genuine, a human being talking to a human being”. These kinds of desperate messages were believed to build sympathy and legitimacy for the rebel movement’s cause. Many of the informants are arguing that they worked like this—hard and carefully—to give a good impression of themselves to the world. This was important because the Libyan opposition had changed from being non-violent civilians, to pick up arms and use violence to attack Gaddafi’s army. They had become armed insurgents, and needed a good argument to explain their actions to the international community, from whom they needed support. The head of the military media unit, Busin, says it was “kill or be killed”, and that they did not have an option but to defend themselves with weapons.

“The happenings on 19th of March sent a clear message to the world. Gaddafi’s army sent missiles randomly in to the city of Benghazi, like we have seen in Homs, Syria. It was random and it killed

many. That gave us even more legitimacy to pick up even more arms, and to fight back even harder. His atrocities gave us a better cause.”

This coincides with what Kiras writes about insurgents often seeking to legitimize their use of violence and translating this into meaningful support for their cause. Government brutality also as Kiras sees it “allows insurgents to act as the avengers of the people, helping to cement the ties between them”. It was also important for the NTC members to show who they were, and therefore counter Gaddafi’s claims of them being thugs and terrorists. This could also help to build legitimacy. Hana Galal wanted to express to the world, through journalists, that this was a peoples’ revolution, and that the people only wanted freedom and dignity. In interviews she strived for legitimacy by telling reporters that “we do not have an ideology or agenda, a certain group does not push our actions, and we are not al-Qaida. We just want what everyone in the world is fighting for: Dignity and human rights. We want to be a part of the world community, have a civil state, rule of law, and separation of powers”. Galal told this in almost every single interview she had. She also adapted her language to different countries in the world, to get an even greater amount of understanding and legitimacy. To the French TV channels she used the revolutionary terms ‘liberté’ and ‘fraternité’, to the American channels she spoke about the importance of a modern constitution like the American, and to the German channels she used terms like ‘freiheit’. While being able to speak to a big world audience, she knew that she possessed power, but that “media was a weapon of two sides. What you say can be misused and misinterpreted and then you can take the whole revolution in a wrong direction”. Busin says that the promotion of NTC as a well-organized and legitimate organization was one of the media committee’s greatest tasks. He understands that leaders in the west were afraid of doing what they have done wrong before: Arming and supporting groups that would go against them later on. He uses the American armament of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan against the Soviets in 1980’s, as an example: “We had to show the world who we were, that we were in control and were not trigger-happy terrorists that wanted to take over the world”.

5.3.3 The motivation for a comprehensive media effort

Gitlin argues, as mentioned, that of all the institution of daily life, “media specializes in orchestrating everyday consciousness, by virtue of their persuasiveness, their accessibility and their centralized symbolic capacity”. Further, he argues that media “directly and indirectly, with pictures and words, produce fields of definition and association”. In lack of other types

of information, the journalists thus become powerful. For example, in relation to a war, the media can have an unknown amount of power to create the public picture and shape the audience beliefs about what is going on. The people working to influence the media during the revolution in Libya knew what power the thousands of journalists coming to Benghazi had. If NTC were able to influence the journalists as a group, they could form public opinion about their revolution throughout the world. As the CNN-effect argues, such pressure can influence politicians and leaders, and create foreign policy. Governments can be pushed into political actions. What follows next is a collection of quotes that shows the awareness and mindset of the revolutionaries. They thought their work could influence the media, which again could influence the international community to act in their favor.

To understand these peoples' motivation and effort, it is important to map what importance they gave the media for the success of the revolution. A usual question I asked the informants was: "Do you believe the revolution would have succeeded without all the journalists being in Libya to report?" The answers were very unanimous, and in line with the logic of the CNN-effect. "The revolution could have succeeded", Busin says,

"but it would have been a lot harder. Because the only way the international community could have helped us, and provided the weapons that we needed, was to create enough media hype about it. Had the world not seen or heard us, then we may not have received weapons and support. It would have made it difficult."

Head of the International Media Unit, Mohammed Elkish, saw the conflict as multisided. He believes he and his colleagues were soldiers fighting in another type of war, with other methods.

"There was the war, the battle with guns and tanks, and there was another war, which was the Media War. Someone had to fight in the Media War, and we did. The journalists were definitely a weapon in this war, a good weapon, because they told the truth." He continues: "The success of this revolution I owe to two: First is God. Second is the journalist. If it wasn't for the journalists, who knows what would have happened here?"

Elkish therefore believes journalists, without doubt, were important to raise the political discussion about the UN resolution. He confirms that this was well thought through by the revolutionaries. Elkish used to work in sales and marketing for 13 years, and says his job during the war was all about marketing. "Basically we sold the revolution to the world", he says. He claims that he used something called "Red Ocean Strategy" in marketing theory.

Here, companies try to outperform their rivals to grab a greater share of product or service demand. (Insead.edu) “I based my strategy mainly on competition, on competing with Gaddafi’s guys. We made sure we spoke to journalists individually, and during press conferences. We thought that the more journalists we spoke to, the better the strategy was”, he says. On a direct question to his colleague Busin, if the NTC saw the journalists as a helpful revolutionary tool, he answers straight forward:

“Yes, extremely. We branded Libya to the world, and we created the image the world saw throughout the war. The world never knew what Libya was before the revolution. Most people had no interest. We put Libya on the map with a bang. Now, everybody knows about Libya and who Libyans are”.

Dr. Hana Galal’s greatest goal was to affect public opinion, through journalists, which could pressure their governments to vote for a decision in the UN. “We had to mobilize the western world, it was very important”, she says. Spokesman Galal will not credit any particular groups for the victory of the Libyan insurgency, and he emphasizes that the spontaneity of the revolution was overwhelming. “Those we owe the most, is the fighters actually carrying out the victory”, he says, and continues: “Everybody did their bit, the best way they knew how, also the media workers. Was it important? I think so. Did it make a difference? I hope so. The media served as a voice against a tyrant. When that is said, this is not something to take glory out of. We needed to do this.”

5.3.4 Propaganda efforts

The revolutionary movement NTC used both propaganda and psychological operations in the war against the regime. Some of it is discussed in the journalist chapter. Some new information will be presented here. The informants will also explain why they think many rebels changed their attitude towards journalists in the end of the conflict. Atrocities from the rebel side made the strive for legitimacy difficult for the Media Committee, and media attention turned against them. As mentioned earlier, propaganda can be defined as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist”. It is closely related to the term psychological operations (PSYOPS), which can be defined as efforts “to convey selected truthful information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of their governments, organizations, groups, and individuals”.

The journalists I have interviewed mention attempts on propaganda, but it is important to have in mind the fragmented nature of the Libyan rebellion. The NTC did not have power or control over several of the connected rebel militias in the country. Much of the propaganda conveyed by the rebels was therefore out of NTC's hands, and not a part of their plan or strategy. That said, NTC also used propaganda, which is confirmed by several of my informants. Particularly one specific strategy is revealed: They planted false rumors to the journalists, as a communication strategy towards the enemy. The head of Military media unit, Abdul Busin, a man that talked to journalists all day long during the conflict, says:

“We tried to create our own propaganda, to counter Gaddafi. Some things were said that may not have been completely true, and we let it flow so the other side could think the rumors were true. We were using that kind of propaganda to pass messages to them, to spread false rumors. For example one of the rumors we put out was that we had hundreds of soldiers inside Tripoli, and that they were ready to attack on our command. That caused a little scare over there. We sent such stories to journalists, and they reported on it, and the other side responded. We were in dialog all the time via the media.”

Mohammed Elkish, the person that arranged the press conferences and was in charge of dealing with international journalists, also confirms this kind of propaganda. Several times they amplified numbers of troops, and they were careful to do it when journalists were not able to confirm the facts:

“We did a lot of propaganda to scare the Gaddafi side, like amplifying the numbers of troops in the frontline. Once we had 14.000 troops in the frontline of Ajdabiya, but we said we had 200.000. We said so via live interviews, so the journalists could not do anything about it, since it was live. The point was to scare Gaddafi's troops, and I think it worked.”

Also messages about advances in the frontline, and the whereabouts of Gaddafi after the fall of Tripoli, were sat out to trigger different reactions in the enemy's lines. Also interesting is that an organized “Media Influence Team” was made by the NTC. This group is important to emphasize in this specific discussion, because their objective serves as an example of a typical PSYOPS. Their objective was “to reach the heart of the world”. For example, if there were a photo or a video of a young injured boy, the group would “add some effects with touching music and stuff”. Elkish says: “We did not change the truth or facts; we just transformed it into something better and bigger, something more effective that would reach the heart of the world”. This adds up to PSYOPS that “conveys selected truthful information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions”. It also adds up with the definition of white propaganda: “Even though it is close to the truth it is presented in a matter

that attempts to convince the audience that the sender is the good guy with the best ideas and political ideology.”

The spokesman Galal says that, even though they tried to use propaganda, they mainly counted on the international media to report on their successes to scare Gaddafi’s lines, while at the same time hoping the journalists falsified his propaganda. Galal also emphasize that propaganda was important for internal use, towards the population of Libya. They put up radio stations with local messages, like “It’s all of Libya against one tyrant”. Galal believe such radio stations were powerful, and in great favor of the revolutionaries. Internal popular support is, as discussed earlier, vital for an insurgency to succeed. Such support can be everything from providing information, intelligence, shelter, hiding places for arms and equipment, to the denying of such help to the enemy. To attempt to carry out an insurgency without the population’s support can be disastrous.

Closely connected with propaganda is the effort to stop reporters from reporting truthfully on issues. As mentioned earlier, many rebels change their behavior towards journalists during the course of the conflict. As their power grew, they became more hostile and skeptical about having journalists around. Two of my journalist informants were even threatened at gunpoint because of their reporting. For example rebels said to Yama Wolusmal, as mentioned before, that they would shoot if he did not stop the interviewing of civilians from Gaddafi’s hometown. At the same time reports came from Human Rights Watch and other organization about atrocities like torture and executions conveyed by rebels. This was a problem for the Media Committee of the NTC, which attempted to make the rebels look as good as possible. At this point Gaddafi’s regime had fallen, and NTC were in power. The international journalists, who earlier in the conflict had helped the rebels to get the word about the revolution out, had now turned their critical focus towards them. NTC’s own human rights expert, Hana Galal, says the wrongdoings by rebels were a problem for them. She emphasize that NTC tried to be open in the beginning of the conflict, letting Human Rights Watch and International Red Cross see all their prisons and camps. She tries to explain the atrocities with the history of the country and the war. “We had 42 years without human rights and few knew what international humanitarian law was. All they knew was Gaddafi’s ethics. The atrocities made against many of the rebels who later committed atrocities, was beyond any human beings’ understanding, she says. Spokesman Galal is open about the change in behavior.

“At the time we had the upper hand, human nature sat in, some revenge was taking place, and violations were taking place. A person that says something else is a liar. Human rights organizations were on our back, and we tried to tell rebel soldiers to calm down. We tried to stop it and say ‘Look, you cannot be as bad as Gaddafi’s people’. We could not control every individual.”

My informants say these atrocities obviously caused a suspicion towards the journalists wanting to tell the world about their actions. Busin says: “Naturally these people wanted to cover up on their own stories; they did not want the world to see this happening. This is why we saw this change in behavior.” He says he tried to be honest to the international journalists about what was going on. “I tried to tell the journalists that we had a slight problem with atrocities, and that there were a lot of stupid people with guns around. But all this is expected. It was a revolution and a war, in a country with no institutions, no foundation, and no infrastructure”. Elkish says he did not try to stop journalists reporting on the negative stories. “If we tried to stop the stories we were not really better than Gaddafi”.

6 Conclusion

I have argued that it is important to investigate and reflect on the Libyan rebel movement and its media efforts, because they managed to do something many insurgencies have not managed before them: To grab the world's attention and get international support for their cause in form of a UN Security Council resolution. To examine what the rebels did to obtain this attention and support has therefore been the focus of this thesis. I said I was going to examine "in what way the Libyan rebel movement organized and facilitated for international journalists during their rebellion, what factors motivated their effort, and to what extent they saw media as a useful tool in this struggle". I interviewed international journalists and traveled to Libya to interview representatives of the rebel movement in a relatively chaotic post-conflict period. Here are the most important findings of my research:

1. The rebel movement's media organization was relatively large, was structured, and it emerged from below. There was no clear plan from the beginning, but as events intensified, both strategy and organizing evolved rapidly. The NTC made a hierarchic system with different units with different objectives. The media center was developed and run by activists, and was at first separate from the political and military movement NTC. The activists helped the journalists by giving them the facilities they needed without charge. To help journalists for free was seen as an important way to help the revolutionary cause. After three months the media center joined NTC under their umbrella. Separate diaspora organizations did also work to achieve the same objectives as the rebel movement inside Libya. Together, these groups' media effort was comprehensive. The founders of the media committee argued to the leadership of NTC in the same way as Clifford Bob's research claims other insurgent groups have thought before: The key is to grab media attention to create international awareness, and to encapsulate the rebels' identity, grievances, and demands. It is about marketing of the rebellion. My research goes on to describe how such media awareness can evolve during a conflict.
2. I have found that during the war in Libya there was a mutual dependence between the journalists and the rebels. Both groups needed each other to achieve what they wanted: The journalists needed the dramatic images, video footage and interviews that are required in news reports, and to get that, they needed proximity to the unfolding

events. Existing literature, like Lynch and McGoldrick, suggests that mainstream journalism are relatively violence-oriented, and that it has a tendency to focus on the visible effects of violence, like killed, wounded and material damage. In Libya, the rebels could grant the proximity the journalists needed. Thus, the journalists were highly dependent on acceptance from the rebels in the opposition-controlled areas. Without such acceptance from the rebels, the journalistic working-conditions would be difficult and dangerous. On the other hand, the rebels were highly dependent on journalists to spread the word about their uprising. They needed legitimacy and support from the international community and saw international media as a tool to get it. Without each other, the two parties' goals would have been far more difficult to achieve. The mutual dependence led to a situation that promoted the goals of both rebels and journalists. It was a win-win situation. This situation helped the rebels' cause, and by savvy and intense efforts they managed to take advantage of the situation and benefit from it.

3. I have found that existing literature reflects and explains much of the Libyan rebels' efforts towards international media: The insurgents had a revolutionary political goal, they needed legitimacy for their violent behavior and international support for their cause to achieve their goal. They saw international journalist and massive media attention as a vital weapon in their struggle. My research exemplifies an insurgent group's need for legitimacy and external support, in a very specific manner. Without media attention, and the support they got, the rebels believe they hardly would have succeeded, and that their uprising could have been stifled.
4. Some literature argues that today's mass media reduce the scope for calm deliberation over policy, forcing policy-makers to respond to whatever issue journalists focuses on. The 'CNN effect' suggests that real-time communications technology could provoke major responses from domestic audiences and political elites to global events. I have found that my informants in the rebel movement believe in media's role as an agenda-setter, and they believe their intensive media efforts helped drum up the support for the UN Security Council decision to intervene in the conflict with a military campaign. By facilitating for journalists, and working to create awareness for their cause, they believe they affected the journalists, which again affected the political decision-making. Their line of thinking is closely connected with the arguments of the

debated CNN-effect. The rebels were increasingly concerned about getting their story told, and saw this as a crucial objective. As an example, press conferences were seen as marketing events.

5. I have also found that the rebels used propaganda in their strategy, and that they had a 'psychological operation' (PSYOPS) working during the war. The definition of PSYOPS fits the Libyan rebels: "It is efforts to convey selected truthful information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately, the behavior of their governments, organizations, groups, and individuals". To some extent the rebels mislead and produced false information, and sometimes they tried to lead information in a direction that benefited them. This is journalistically problematic because many of the journalists were highly dependent on the rebels and the information they provided, and many journalists were uncritical in the use of the rebels' services. Towards the end of the conflict the rebels in the front line were hostile to journalists that reported on their wrongdoings. When they were 'underdogs' they strived for publicity, but when they had power they became more hostile. The strategized propaganda from NTC was mainly meant to counter the regime's propaganda, and was sometimes used as a tool in physical battle on the ground.

Because of the grave seriousness of military actions, the underlying causes leading up to such actions are important to investigate. My research has examined a group's efforts to make a military intervention happen, and their arguments of why their violent struggle should be supported. As we know, the rebels' media strategy worked. They got international help. This is where my research can be useful, and have implications for other researchers in this field: I describe the media efforts of an insurgency that succeeded in their objective, and I describe how they worked to achieve what they wanted. Here are suggestions to how my findings can be supplemented by further research:

- With this examination as a basis, other researchers can compare the Libyan insurgency to other insurgencies and revolutions that have failed. What was present in the Libyan uprising that lacked in unsuccessful and failed revolutions? For example, the uprising in Syria has many of the same components as the one in Libya. What are the differences between the conflict in Libya and Syria? The answer is most likely complex, but still, one interesting aspect is that the number of international journalists

in Syria cannot match the numbers in Libya. When a government missile killed the famous American correspondent Marie Colvin as she hid in a makeshift rebel media center inside Homs, Syria, only five other journalists were with her. In the media center in Benghazi hundreds of journalists were coming and going continuously.

- The thesis may also be supplemented by further research in the media/conflict field. I have investigated the rebels, but someone should examine the other side as well: The journalists, and the journalism they produced during the war. When such research is done, a more complete picture can be seen.
- An important extension of my research would be an investigation of the international community's political considerations prior to the intervention in Libya. My research does not investigate how the media attention given to the Libyan rebels actually affected the political decision-making. If media hype was one of the aspects leading to the bombing of Gaddafi's regime, it is something that should be discussed.

My investigation gives an example of what publicity efforts journalists may face from parties in a conflict in the 21st century. As before, journalists see highly sophisticated and advanced attempts to influence them, but now, with internet and an increasing number of global 24/7 news networks, the reach of publicity in media has increased. Therefore it is even more important to investigate and illuminate such attempts.

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Appendix:

Interview Guides

To journalists:

1. Firstly, as background, when did you enter Libya for the first time, and how did you proceed covering the conflict throughout 2011?
2. What attitudes towards international journalists did you experience on the rebel side, and what kind of message did the rebel fighters want to express?
3. Is your impression that the rebel saw it as an advantage to have foreign media reporting on their situation, and in what way? Were they helpful towards you in the towns they held and in the front line?
4. In what way did the rebels talk about the importance of foreign help and support in their fight against Gaddafi? Did they see external support as crucial?
5. Journalist I have spoken to say the rebels changed during the conflict. When they were underdogs in the beginning, they really wanted journalist to report on everything they said and did. But after they entered Tripoli, and were fighting for Sirte, they became increasingly hostile, because journalists also reported on their wrongdoings. Is this a conclusion you support? Did you experience this?
6. Is your impression that the rebels succeeded in giving a positive impression in the beginning of the conflict?
7. They even made a media centre in Benghazi, with a lot of services for journalists. How do you think this worked to help bringing their message of “the good guys” forward?
8. How did the NTC leadership handle the media, as you see it?
9. You have worked extensively with the Libyan conflict. How was this conflict different from other conflict you have covered, and why?

To activist in media center:

1. If you could start out by telling me: What was your position during the revolution in Libya. What was your work?
2. How did you end up in that job? What position did you have before the revolution?
3. At what point during the beginning of the revolution did people see the need for getting people to work with media questions?

4. What was said about the importance of the media in the revolution from in the beginning?
5. What was your motivation for working to help the media?
6. How did you build up the media centre? How did you organize?
7. What message did you want to give the journalist of the Libyan uprising?
8. Why do you think people of Benghazi was so happy about the journalist being there?
9. How important did you see the need for external support for the uprising to succeed? NATO help. Did you know it was vital for the uprising to succeed?
10. Did you believe that media coverage was important to help getting external support?
11. Did you feel that the media reported the story as you wanted it to be?
12. Did you try to influence them to report in any way?
13. What was the most difficult thing working with journalists?
14. Do you think the foreign media helped the rebels gain legitimacy for its cause?
15. Why do you think so many journalists came to report about the Libyan war?
16. What was the biggest problem dealing with journalists?

To NTC leadership:

1. If you could start out by telling me: What was your position during the revolution in Libya. What was your work?
2. How did you end up in that job? What position did you have before the revolution?
3. At what point during the making of NTC did the organization see the need for people working with media questions such as you?
4. What was said about the importance of the media in the revolution from in the beginning?
5. What was your strengths and Gaddafi's weakness in terms of legitimacy?
6. How did NTC organize its media work and press conferences?
7. Why is media handling so crucial in a conflict, do you think?
8. Did NTC have a plan on how to deal with the numbers of journalists that came to Libya? Or did it happen as it went on?
9. What message was it important for NTC to express to the journalists? How did you wish to portray yourself?
10. Gaddafi propaganda claimed some of the revolutionaries were thugs and that had connections with al-Qaida. He tried to shed a negative light on you. How important

was it for you to counter these claims so that the world rather could have a positive image of the rebels?

11. How important did you see the need for external support for the uprising to succeed?
Did you think that it was vital for the uprising to succeed?
12. Did you believe that media coverage was important to help getting external support?
13. Did the NTC see it as a benefit that almost all international journalists were reporting from Benghazi?
14. Did you see the media as a tool for the uprising? Did NTC think that?
15. What do you think about the job the young people of Benghazi did by helping media so much out? Did it help you?
16. What did you do to inform the media as best as you could?
17. Do you think the foreign media helped the rebels gain legitimacy for their cause?
18. Did you have your own propaganda as well?
19. Many journalists reported on rebels wrongdoing, and bad behavior. What did you think when such information came out?
20. Toward the end: Why do you think the Libyan revolution attracted so many journalists?
21. Could the revolution succeed without journalists telling the story?